



**THE EXPERIENCE OF EXCLUSION  
FROM SCHOOL, FROM THE  
VIEWPOINT OF THOSE EXCLUDED AND  
THE GENERALITY OF PUPILS**

Gilleen **Grassie**

PhD

The University of Edinburgh  
2004

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This thesis explores the experiences of exclusion from the viewpoint of young people in mainstream secondary schools; both those excluded and the generality of pupils. It is set within an international and national context of concern about issues of inclusion and exclusion and at a time of growing recognition of the rights of young people as citizens.

Within the thesis a framework of layers of exclusion is developed which suggests that official exclusion for indiscipline is merely the tip of a much larger iceberg of exclusionary pupil experience. This framework identifies internal exclusion, disaffection, social isolation and attendance difficulties as equally significant in the ways they may marginalise pupils. It suggests that continuing concerns about the threat to moral order in society combined with the demands of the educational quasi-market and its legitimate concerns for monitoring and measurement have together diminished present understandings of exclusion. This new model rejects the elision of disruption with exclusion and sets out to challenge assumptions about the impact of different kinds of exclusion on the lives of young people as pupils in school.

The study is based in four secondary schools in one urban local authority area, using pairs of low and high excluding schools and focussed on direct contact with male and female pupils aged 13-15 years. The research design is underpinned by a commitment to the value of listening to pupils and a belief in their capacity to make worthwhile contributions to knowledge. There is an equal commitment to the view that accounts of experience are able to make a valid contribution to knowledge. Methods of data collection reflect these methodological considerations and also concerns that many young people in schools have little practice in speaking at length about their own personal experiences and perceptions without this being tied to curricular requirements. The design also recognises that there are few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate self-efficacy in schools and that within this there is a need to explore more closely the complexity in pupil/teacher and pupil/pupil power relations. The design, therefore, is constructed around a series of individual interviews and focus groups with young people which foreground the issues of access and consent and develop new groupwork-based approaches to take account of these important concerns.

The findings explore perceptions of power and constructions of discipline. The evidence collected calls into question pervasive assumptions about the distinctions between disrupted and disruptive pupils and reveals much more of the complexity of pupil experience. The findings also raise questions about similarities in pupil experience across different schools. Overall, the young people's reflections on the issues of exclusion raise an urgent set of broader questions about the aims, policy and practice of schools as institutions.



## **DECLARATION**

This thesis has been composed by me and is entirely my own work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all the young people who participated in this research. Their help is very much appreciated.

I also thank Tom and Sam Padraig who helped me keep a sense of perspective and fun when the working days seemed longest and the computer screen most demanding.

For their supportive advice, I also wish to thank my supervisors, Pamela Munn and Janet Draper. That I have actually enjoyed the work for this thesis is largely due to their consistent encouragement.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Declaration</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Tables and Figures</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>Current Understandings of Exclusion from School: a Review of the Literature</b>	<b>9</b>
Introduction	9
Official Exclusion from School	10
Unofficial and Hidden Exclusions	24
A Broader Conception of Exclusion?	27
Key Issues and Concepts arising from the Literature	31
The Context of School Experience	31
Including the Generality of Pupils	37
A Framework of Layers of Exclusion	38
Research Purposes	44
Research Questions	44
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>46</b>
Introduction	46
Voiced Research with Young People	49
Research Method	55
Case Study	56
Ethics	59
Validity and Reliability	62
The Researcher as Instrument	64
Research Design	65
Interviews	66
Interview Instrumentation	68
Focus Groups	68
Focus Group Instrumentation	70

Other Sources of Data	71
Summary	73
 <b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
<b>Findings: The Process of Seeking Access and Consent</b>	<b>76</b>
Introduction	76
Selection of Schools	77
Negotiating Access and Consent with Schools	81
Identifying Potential Research Participants in Schools	87
Seeking Consent from Young People	92
Summary	93
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
<b>Findings: The Experiences of Excluded Young People in School</b>	<b>95</b>
Introduction	95
Research Questions for Excluded Pupils	95
The Interview Process	96
Method of Analysis	99
Exploring the Findings from Individual Interviews	100
Previous School Experience	100
Experience of Present School	103
Friendships	103
Difficult Peer Relations	107
Adult Relations	108
Work, Achievement and Attainment	115
Beyond School	120
Experiences of Exclusion	127
Disruption	128
Process of Official Exclusion	130
Effectiveness of official Exclusion	132
Event of Official Exclusion	135
Gender and Official Exclusion	136
Alternatives to Exclusion	138
Hidden Exclusion	139
Attendance	141
Other forms of Hidden Exclusion	144
Documentary Analysis	145
Summary	147

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Findings: The Experiences of the Generality of Pupils 150**

Introduction	150
Research Questions for the Generality of Pupils	150
The Focus Group Process	151
Context of Analysis	152
Consent	152
Location	155
Prior Group Experience	156
A Generality of Pupils?	157
Method of Analysis	159
Focus Group Findings	162
Disruption Cards	162
Concentric Conversations	169
Comment on Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards	182
Behaviour Questionnaire	182
Method of Analysis	183
Own Involvement in Disruption/Rule Breaking	184
Effects of Peer Involvement in Disruption/Rule Breaking?	185
Are Pupils in High Excluding Schools Involved in More Disruption?	190
Do Pupils in High Excluding Schools Experience More Peer Disruption?	192
What is the Relationship between Those Disrupted and Those Who Disrupt?	194
Are There Differences in the Experiences of Young Men and Young Women?	195
Comparison of Male/Female Perceptions of Peer Disruption	198
Behaviour Questionnaire Summary	198
Summary	199

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Discussion 202**

The Process of Seeking Access and Consent with Schools	204
Seeking Access and Consent with Young People	206
The Data Collection Process	207
The Main Findings	208
Concluding Comments	215

### **Bibliography 218**

<b>Appendices</b>	
Concentric Conversations guide	A
Disruption Cards guide	D
Disruption Cards validation guide	G
Interview Schedule	M
Behaviour Questionnaire	S

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

### Table

1.1	English/Scottish differences on official Exclusion	21
3.1	School Exclusions 2001/2002	77
3.2	Summary: Interviews in all schools	87
3.3	Consent: all schools	92
4.1	Interview participant details	97
4.2	Adult relationships: pairs of schools	112
4.3	Adult relationships and 'layers of exclusion'	113
4.4	Characteristics of pupils with direct experience of official Exclusion	124
4.5	Characteristics of pupils at risk of official Exclusion	125
4.6	Characteristics of pupils excluded in broader sense	126
4.7	Official Exclusion: notions of effectiveness	133
5.1	Focus Group composition	151
5.2	Data collection instrumentation	152
5.3	Disruption Cards: responses	163
5.4	Disruption Cards: 'If I had to deal with someone who upset the class I...'	167
5.5	Disruption Cards: 'The worst punishment in this school is...'	168
5.6	Concentric Conversations: 'Do you think that Exclusion works?'	173
5.7	Concentric Conversations: 'What are the signs that someone is heading for Exclusion?'	175
5.8	Behaviour Questionnaire: Summary	183
5.9	Behaviour Questionnaire: Own involvement in disruption/rule breaking	184
5.10	Behaviour Questionnaire: Effects of peer involvement in disruption/rule breaking	186
5.11	Behaviour Questionnaire: 'Is there anything else that has really annoyed or upset you?'	189
5.12	Behaviour Questionnaire: Are pupils in high Excluding schools involved in more disruption?	191



## Figures

1.1	The 'Iceberg' of exclusion	40
5.1	Focus group composition	151
1.	Behaviour Questionnaire: Are pupils in high Excluding schools involved in more disruption?	192
2.	Behaviour Questionnaire: Do pupils in high Excluding schools experience more disruption by their peers?	193
3.	Behaviour Questionnaire: Comparison of male/female direct involvement in disruption	196

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
AHT	Assistant Head Teacher
ALTEX	Alternatives to Exclusion from School grant
CDT	Craft, Design and Technology
DHT	Depute Head Teacher
ESYTC	Edinburgh Study of Youth Transition and Crime
FME	Free Meals Entitlement
HE	Home Economics
HT	Head Teacher
PE	Physical Education
PPR	Pupil Personal Record
PSG	Pupil Support Group
RE	Religious Education
SE	Social Education

# INTRODUCTION

This thesis sets out to examine exclusion from school<sup>1</sup> from a new set of perspectives, bringing to the foreground the experiences of both those excluded and the generality of pupils in mainstream secondary schools. It gathers data through direct contact with young people and explores their perceptions of issues surrounding exclusion, disruption, non-attendance and a range of other experiences of marginalisation. The findings are used to interrogate current critical understandings of exclusion and to generate a new set of questions about the continuing turbulence in schools today.

The research underpinning the thesis has its origins in concerns about the tensions in policies aimed at increasing the inclusiveness of schools in recent years. The initiatives arising out of these very welcome policies have been instrumental in ensuring an increase in the numbers of children and young people with additional needs who are successfully maintained within mainstream schools. It is to be hoped that the extension of the Disability Discrimination Act (2000) to education will continue this process. However, there has long been debate about the differential impact of inclusion policies on different groups of young people, and how best to reconcile the twin targets of increasing attainment and inclusion. This tension is particularly acute for those whose troubled and troublesome behaviour seems to place their needs in conflict with the needs of an academically successful and well-disciplined school.

As part of the drive for inclusion by the new Labour Government in 1997, targets were set for a substantial reduction in rates of official, disciplinary Exclusion across the UK. These targets were monitored closely by local authorities and Exclusions rates used as one of a range of performance indicators in schools. However, since then, and within a relatively short space of time, there has been a powerful resurgence of concern about the

---

<sup>1</sup> Exclusion is written without initial capitalisation except where it refers specifically to official Exclusion for reasons associated with indiscipline.

effects of increased disruption on more settled pupils and the rights of teachers and pupils to work in a positive and calm environment. Significantly, no new targets for reducing disciplinary Exclusion were set when the initial three year period came to an end, and there has been no outcry about a need to do so.

This concern about the needs of the settled generality of pupils seems to me to be an entirely legitimate one but one which is also so deeply embedded in the daily discourse of parents, teachers, schools and local education authorities that it has become unassailable; totemic. There is a set of assumptions about the detrimental effects of the behaviour of some pupils on the learning and social relationships of the majority. These assumptions are so powerful that they validate the most serious response that a school can make to disruptive behaviour without involving the police. Yet, in a field which has shown increasing interest in the views of children and young people, there is still very little research which explores the understandings and experiences of this generality, from their own perspective.

Alongside this concern with the need to explore the experiences of the generality in much more depth, a review of the literature reveals a similarly urgent set of questions about the meanings of 'disruptive' and 'excluded'. I have noted an increasing recognition of the need to include and value the views of young people in examining experiences which directly affect them. However, until recently, most research in this area has relied on the use of proxy-informants; parents, teachers and other professionals, to interpret and reflect the views of young people. Permeated by notions of young people as either 'incompetent' or a 'threat' (Hendrick 1994, Qvortrup 1987) research has often focussed on the deviance of the young person or the damage done to them. It has inadvertently reduced them to a set of needs or failures.

Such concerns are also reflected in the nationally available statistics on issues associated with exclusion from school. Although there is acknowledged to be wide regional and local variation in the information gathered across the UK, there is now a significant body of information available on some specific aspects of exclusion. Information is available

on the trends in official disciplinary Exclusion, the extent of such Exclusions and reasons recorded by schools. It is also possible to identify common characteristics of those Excluded, likely immediate outcomes of Exclusion and possible longer-term effects, in an overlap with research on adult offenders. Within this area, there is also a small body of literature which explores the views of Excluees and their families, though again focussing most often on the deviance or the damage associated with the Exclusion itself. There is less detailed information available on non-attendance but it too is monitored nationally and seen as a measure of school performance.

Although this is a large literature then, there is not an equal interest in understanding all aspects of exclusion in general. There is a clear emphasis on official and permanent forms of disciplinary Exclusion. There is far less interest in other ways in which troubled and troublesome young people might experience exclusion or marginalisation, although, interestingly, many commentators agree that hidden exclusion is a common feature of UK secondary schools. It has been suggested that the drive to reduce official Exclusion has led to an increased level of internal and hidden exclusion and may therefore contribute to an understanding of the continued turbulence in schools. As long ago as 1992, Stirling talked about official Exclusion as the 'tip of the iceberg' (1992; 128) and found evidence for concern about hidden forms of exclusion such as informal sending home, differing interpretations of medical absence or non-attendance in general, pupils sitting outside classrooms or being barred from certain subjects without negotiation of a planned and relevant alternative. In isolation these incidents may seem minor but cumulatively may have far-reaching consequences for pupils. If such events happen often to an individual pupil, the concern is that the pupil is denied an appropriate education and that the pupil and their family are denied a right of appeal against that loss of education. Schools are not required to pass this information on to local authorities so that it is difficult to know the extent of such practices and to understand how these might relate to official Exclusion.

Stirling's image of the iceberg (1992) seems to offer a valuable means of approach to a more finely textured understanding of issues of exclusion. This thesis develops the



notion of the iceberg as a conceptual framework which forms the basis for discussion of the relationship between different possible kinds of exclusion. It admits the importance of official disciplinary Exclusion but is also able to draw attention to other forms of exclusion, less visible, less easily measured and quantified, but not necessarily less significant. It illustrates the continuing structural concern and prioritisation of the need to respond, and be seen to respond, to overtly challenging behaviour in schools, most often by disruptive young men. In so doing, it calls into question structural understanding of other groups and the appropriateness of school responses to their perceived needs. It suggests that in the hectic life of schools there is little time left over for those young people who are not shouting out their grief or anger so loudly that they cannot be ignored. Within a much smaller body of research, there are concerns expressed about young people who internalise their problems, who feel disaffected or isolated for a wide range of reasons but who are not challenging to authority in the traditional sense of the word. The iceberg alerts the research, therefore, to the dangers of being misled by the very vocal and visible needs of disruptive young men. This is not to deny that they are an important part of the overall picture, but it is argued that, as yet, it is not clear how their experiences fit with the broader picture. The framework of 'layers of exclusion' allows development of discussion about the possible relationships between different kinds of exclusion within and from school. It also highlights the need to examine the relationship between the excluded and the generality of pupils and so to bring some clarity to assumptions made about their needs.

Rather than focussing on one particular theory to explore these concerns, this thesis draws on the work of a number of key writers, both within and beyond education itself. The continuing dominance of research and policy interest in official Exclusion is examined in turn from functionalist, quasi-Marxist and feminist viewpoints, recognising that present-day policies are often the result of the accumulation and inter-weaving of a number of different and even competing discourses. Questions are asked about the process and purposes of official Exclusion and how these relate to current constructions of 'punishment' and 'discipline' in schools. Discipline is examined in the light of different perspectives on power relations and concerns about an increase in micro-control



within schools. A contrast is drawn between the restricted and reductionist ways in which schools define 'discipline' today and the more creative and flexible interpretations offered by a range of commentators.

The over-representation of boys and young men in official Exclusion statistics is then problematised, providing a basis for the exploration of gender as an essential aspect of understanding exclusion as a whole. Assumptions about pupil agency which seem to underpin the use of the Exclusion process also come under scrutiny and are called into question. This leads to consideration of the need for a broader exploration of pupil agency among excluded and 'settled' pupils, and a Foucauldian perspective is suggested as a useful way forward.

These key issues and concepts arising through a review of the literature form the basis for the design of the research, the questions guiding the empirical work and later interpretation of the findings. The identification of a paucity of research which speaks directly with young people about their experiences is seen as being in need of urgent remedy. The recognition of exclusion as a complex set of experiences which may affect a number of different groups of pupils is understood to provide a necessary and relevant focus. The need to include the views of the settled generality of pupils is viewed as equally essential, to ensure a genuine validity and reliability in the search for a better understanding of these issues.

The thesis is set out as follows. Chapter One examines current understandings of Exclusion from school. It reviews the literature and relevant policy initiatives in order to identify the major issues surrounding exclusion and the most significant gaps in this literature. From there it sets out the need to take account of the context of broader school experiences in understanding exclusion and outlines the notion of a framework of 'layers of exclusion'. The purposes of the research and the major questions guiding the study are then described.

Chapter Two explores the methodological considerations of the research. It argues the need for voiced research as the most appropriate way in which to gather data about the experiences of young people with regard to exclusion and disruption. It considers the difficulties of ensuring that research which values experience as a contribution to knowledge is itself valued by the educational research community. It welcomes the increasing recognition of the valuable contribution young people can make to research. It also recognises that to listen is to risk but urges the need to act upon the contributions and suggestions offered by young people as research participants. It outlines the reasons for adopting a case study approach in this research and the particular considerations that arise when using this approach in schools, and with young people as pupils in schools. It describes the reasons underlying the choice of pairs of two schools with acknowledged good practice on official disciplinary Exclusion for this case study. The value of focussing on young people who may have some experience of some kind of exclusion but whose relationships with school have not broken down entirely are discussed. The chapter then goes on to describe the rationale for adopting mixed methods and the instrumentation of the design. The use of focus groups and individual interview is explained in detail and an argument made for the need to adopt an innovative and more inclusive approach to data collection, based on groupwork approaches.

Chapter Three is the first chapter which describes and analyses the findings from the fieldwork, though in a sense this data relates to the period usually considered as precursor to the fieldwork. A contrast in achieving a negotiated consent between different schools is explored, and later contrasted with the experience of seeking consent directly with the pupils as research participants. These experiences of seeking access and negotiating consent with and within schools were found to be unexpectedly complex and illuminating. They therefore came to be seen as a set of findings in their own right, but also able to cast a light on the findings from direct contact with young people in the focus groups and individual interviews.

Chapters Four and Five examine the major findings from the fieldwork itself, analysing the data in the light of previous research and theoretical discussion. Chapter Four

examines the findings from speaking with pupils considered by schools to have some experience of exclusion; whether that be official or unofficial. The interview process is described and method of analysis outlined. The findings themselves examine general experiences of schools attended, friendships and more difficult peer relations, adult relations and work, achievement and attainment. Activities, interests beyond schools and plans for the future are also explored. With the context established in this way, the discussion moves on to explore experiences of issues surrounding exclusion; disruption, official Exclusions and alternatives to Exclusions as well as understandings and experience of hidden and internal exclusion with a particular interest in non-attendance. The discovery of wide-ranging criticism about discipline systems, the process of official Exclusion and monitoring of attendance among these pupils raises questions about effectiveness of present approaches.

Chapter Five brings together the other major set of findings of the research, examining the experiences of the generality of pupils in the same schools as the excluded pupils in the study. The approaches to data collection with these groups of young people are described and the development and application of this groupwork-based technique for data gathering closely analysed. With less guidance in the literature about how to manage the data from focus groups, this chapter also sets out major considerations for analysis. These include awareness of the overlapping contexts of analysis as well as the need to develop appropriate methods of analysis.

The questions discussed with young people addressed many of the same areas as those discussed in the individual interviews and a surprising level of similarity between excluded pupils and the generality of pupils emerges from comparison of the findings. As part of an interest in understanding experiences of both sets of pupils, the generality were also asked to comment on their personal involvement in disruption as well as perceptions of others' disruption. The findings reveal a much more complex picture of disruption than has hitherto been apparent.

Finally, Chapter Six considers the major findings from both sets of encounters with young people in the four study schools. It emphasises the need to consider the evidence

that officially Excluded pupils and others have much more in common than often recognised. Attention is drawn to two areas of common concern among the research participants, both of which were unexpected but understood to have significant implications for a broader understanding of pupil experience of exclusion. The first of these is the discovery of the value which seemingly disengaged pupils attach to adult relationships in school, to academic achievement and attainment and these pupils' sustained attempts to engage with academic work. These findings may explain why some young people do not become permanently Excluded or why some are able to maintain an irregular attendance rather than cease to attend at all. This, it is suggested, offers grounds for hope and a possible way forward in rebuilding effective relationships with marginalized or excluded pupils. The second significant area of general agreement identified among those excluded and the generality of pupils lies in the concerns they each raise about the effectiveness of school discipline systems in general. Their reservations about the consistency and effectiveness of official Exclusion process in particular are mirrored in their unease about peer difficulties and the capacity of school management to respond to issues arising from these difficulties. Considered alongside the findings that the generality of pupils are more often involved in low level disruption than commonly acknowledged, it is argued that this raises important questions about how different groups of pupils are identified, perceived as having different needs, giving rise to different responses within schools. It is further argued that the unexpected commonality of experience and perception found among the majority of young people across the pairs of schools raises an important question about pupil identity *per se*. The incisive reflections of young people about discipline in schools, and official Exclusion as part of that, are presented as evidence of the need for schools to challenge diminished constructions of discipline and to listen to the constructive and creative suggestions offered by many of the young participants in this research, both excludees and the generality.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Current Understandings of Exclusion from School: A Review of the Literature**

#### **Introduction**

Young people in schools can have problems which manifest themselves in a wide variety of ways. They may be openly challenging and disruptive, or may appear withdrawn and unusually quiet. They may absent themselves from school or avoid particular subjects or teachers. They may be disaffected or disengaged. Concern about the behaviour of children and young people has long been the subject of debate in Western societies. Concern about the behaviour of pupils in school has been part of this debate for at least as long as education has been compulsory.

However, greatest research and theoretical interest has focussed on ‘public issues’ (Wright Mills 1959;8), with how and why society responds to overt, rather than more subtle challenges to normative behaviour. Behaviour which is openly challenging, confrontational or aggressive has often been seen as a threat, not only to the individual teacher but, by extension, to all adults in the school, to the smooth running of that school and ultimately to order in society itself. Official Exclusion procedure in the UK, when a child or young person is sent away from school because of indiscipline, is the most serious sanction available to schools, other than police involvement, and as such is often seen as the most tangible way to punish, contain or regulate this perceived threat.

## **Official Exclusion from School**

One of the major building blocks of official Exclusion policy has been influenced by Durkheim (1933, 1961, 1973) and associated with the need to build and maintain society's morality and solidarity. For the functionalists, the disruptive, deviant behaviour that leads to official, disciplinary Exclusion is understood as a normal and necessary part of society. Measures such as Exclusion act as a demonstration to both wrong-doers and rule-followers of the consequences of such behaviour. Durkheim (1973) asserts a need for punishment as part of concerns about 'moral order' and suggests that it is in the classroom that the moral order is most fragile and dependent on the teacher's actions. Such arguments continue to inform thinking about issues of behaviour today and help explain the continued use of Exclusion procedure in our society, and also the grounds for such Exclusions. Regulation 4 of the School General (Scotland) Regulations (1975) as amended, is referred to within the new Scottish Guidance on Exclusion and states, for example, that an education authority shall not Exclude a pupil from school unless they:

'Are of the opinion that the parent of the pupil refuses or fails to comply, or to allow the pupil to comply, with the rules, regulations, or disciplinary requirements of the school, or

consider that in all the circumstances to allow the pupil to continue attendance at the school would be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school or the educational well-being of the pupils there'

(C8/03 Scottish Executive)

This newly issued Guidance, Exclusion from Schools in Scotland (C8/03) above, replaces another, relatively recently introduced Guidance (C2/98). The newer Guidance emphasises the rights of the majority of well-behaved pupils, and does so through reference to relevant pieces of legislation, lending weight to its statement that, 'it is vital that the option of [E]xclusion is available to education authorities' (C8/03;6). The previous Exclusion Guidance, much less formal and legalistic in tone, and the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act (2000), laid stronger emphasis on an inclusive ethos. This



support is now more muted, except where it refers specifically to those pupils with a Record of Need; a group which rarely includes those with behaviour difficulties. Whereas the previous Guidance made few references to the responsibilities of parents, there is now a number of statements which remind parents of their various duties under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to provide 'efficient education' for their child; reinforcing a call to ensure that order is maintained for the majority, by the majority. These changes in emphasis take place in a political context of an international 'retreat from welfare' (Osler and Vincent 2003, Hallett and Hazel 1998) towards more punitive approaches, where youth courts are being piloted in Scotland and the Children's Hearing system is under enormous pressure from an increasing numbers of referrals (Peacock in *The Scotsman*, 7 May 2004). It is interesting to note that had this review of the literature been undertaken only four or five years ago, then such Durkheimian concerns with order might have been said to be waning, but now seems to be in the ascendant again.

However, explanations of social concerns about behaviour in schools have not only been influenced by the functionalists and a concern for moral order. For the quasi-Marxists, responses to behaviour problems in schools, and Exclusion as the most serious of all the sanctions available to schools, are explained, not in terms of a contribution to an essential moral order, but both as a signal of the consequences of non-social behaviour, and as a way to 'defuse and depoliticize [the] potentially explosive class relations' (Blyth and Milner 1994;301). For these commentators, Exclusion from school is understood as an inevitable part of society's system of control and reproduction of labour. Overt challenges to normative behaviour are countered because of the threat they pose to the reproduction of labour and may be seen to be 'defused and depoliticised' very effectively by an individualising and isolating process such as Official Exclusion. This process of Exclusion may be understood as a foretaste of the experience of the disciplinary measures that structure the workplace, and perhaps also as a warning of the isolation of unemployment or of a possible future prison sentence. Bowles and Gintis also argued that to understand education it is necessary to see it in the context of the class struggle, noting, 'The structure of the educational experience is admirably suited to nurturing attitudes and behavior consonant with participation in the labour force' (1976;9). More

recently, schooling has also been described as the 'deep structure and grammar of class domination and inequality' (Furlong 1985;158), a phrase which powerfully conveys the hidden but pervasive confluence of societal and educational priorities which are seen to justify official Exclusion.

The introduction in the 1990s of a quasi-market in education in the UK, with competition between schools as a way to improve standards, accompanied by notions of parental choice, specialisation, target setting and 'league tables' are seen by such writers to further extend the reach of capitalist values into the experience of schooling. It has been argued that these have all become part of a concern with public image and 'marketability' which requires that a school must maintain a high profile in the educational market (Munn *et al.* 2000, Parsons 1999, Hayden 1997, Brown, Halsey *et al.* 1997, Ball *et al.* 1997, Stirling 1992). Although this marketisation has been less strongly supported in Scotland, schools have not been unaffected. Heightened awareness of public image in schools, in both England and Scotland, has been cited as having a far-reaching effect on how a school responds to and records their response to a pupil with difficulties (Osler and Osler 2002). Brown, Halsey *et al.* talk about 'individual motivation, micro-economic change, the virtues of competition, and fiscal restraint' (1997;21) as the main themes of these market-based reforms. Within schools this has been interpreted as 'value for money, improvements in educational standards, greater responsiveness to consumer preferences, and equity' (Levacic 1994;29).

For Bourdieu, discussions of social positioning and power require consideration not simply of social class but of particular sources of differentiation within social class. His assertion that 'the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment [is] the domestic transmission of cultural capital' (1997; 48) borrows the language and values of economics to highlight the inequalities that can arise from a reliance on the market. Such a view throws new light on discourse in schools about 'the need for greater parental support' and the implication that it is absent where most needed. He offers useful insight into the concern about discipline in schools as part of a wider societal concern about a lack of parental discipline and responsibilities (Imich 1994, Audit Commission 1996).

Bourdieu's discussions of social capital also help to interpret findings which suggest that equality of access to education has not ended larger inequalities. He thus offers an explanation of why social background remains important throughout schooling, not just at the point of entry, and why social disadvantage becomes more, rather than less, marked in exam results beyond age sixteen.

The range of explanations for society's concern with overtly challenging behaviour offers insight into many different kinds of 'public issues' related to behaviour, school discipline and exclusion, but it is equally important to understand the ways in which the 'private troubles' of individual pupils with behaviour problems in school, and the explanations which have come to dominance, interact with and influence these larger concerns. Approaches to explanations for individual behaviour problems have drawn on three main perspectives; within-child explanations, explanations which seek to understand the influence of schools and finally those which seek larger structural reasons for individual behaviour problems. As with the larger explanations of society's concerns about behaviour, each of these has been influential at certain times and all, to some extent, have given shape to current policy.

As recently as 2000, Munn *et al.* reported that teachers characterised pupils as 'worthy or unworthy of help' based on whether a pupil was 'nice', whether their parents were seen to be 'bothered', the age and stage of the pupil and whether their problems were 'emotional (worthy)' or 'behavioural (unworthy)' (2000;55). This is an important set of findings because it reveals the continuing prevalence, despite the rhetoric of inclusion, of earlier dualistic understandings of children as inherently 'mad' or 'bad' (Bridgeland 1971); as either victims of circumstance or in need of chastisement. It reinforces the distinction made in 1989 by the Elton Report between '“ordinary” bad behaviour and disturbed behaviour' (DES 1989,6:30), and an emphasis on 'defective student pathologies' (Slee 1998). It continues what Levitas has identified as the 'transfer of risk from the collective to the individual'(1998;4).

Other attempts to understand behaviour problems have sought explanations not within the child but within the school itself, and often link to structural explanations of society's concern with threats and dangers. There has been a focus on disaffection within this body of literature (Harlen and Malcolm 1997, Lamb 2000, Lloyd 2002) and how this may relate to the lack of an appropriate and relevant curriculum (Dyson 1997). Debate about the meaning of the term 'appropriate' within this context continues; between those would argue the need for a restricted, more practical curriculum for the disaffected on the one hand, and on the other, those who talk of a vision of schooling which provides an 'opportunity for an apprenticeship in democracy' (Slee 1998;15) or a view that education has a moral purpose of preparation for adulthood in an ever-changing society (Fullan 1993).

At the same time Paul Cooper (1999, Cooper and Upton 1990) has attempted to integrate within-child and broader explanations of behaviour problems, setting out an argument for systemic or 'eco-systemic...multidimensional, multidisciplinary' approaches, which asserts that both the social and individual explanations are equally relevant. Although this seems to offer a useful way forward, he states that, 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties [EBD] often manifest themselves in the classroom in the form of non co-operative or oppositional behaviour' (1999;3). While he states his case for a broad interpretation of the term EBD, he offers an example which refers to a narrower, stereotypical, within-child definition which implies that difficulties are mainly found in the classroom and primarily within teacher/pupil relations, a suggestion strongly countered by other research (Blatchford and Sharp 1994, Imich 1994, Mellor 1999). This latter body of research suggests that some of the tensions in pupil/adult relationships may be viewed as one indication or symptom of pupil/pupil conflict, and that it may be useful to consider official Exclusion and other forms of exclusion as being influenced by group as well as individual behaviour. Although the issues of bullying are now well documented, much of this research focuses on individual incidents and the individual young people involved (Kelly 1994). The overall significance of everyday inter-pupil personal relationships within the school setting may still be under-estimated despite its likely contribution to a fuller understanding of underlying reasons for exclusion.



Larger structural explanations of individual behaviour problems link to concern about changes in society and relate in part to some of the arguments explored earlier about responses to openly disruptive behaviour. Commentators here focus on concerns about the increase in relative poverty, family breakdown and difficult home circumstances (McCormick and Leicester 1998, Parsons 1999, Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Hayden and Martin 1998, Hatcher 2000, Hodgson 1999, Dyson 1997). Alongside this, Rutter and Smith's findings (1995) suggest that there has been a significant increase in psycho-social disorders in young people over time. All of these factors may link directly to an increase in troubled and troublesome behaviour in schools.

Through official statistics and more qualitative research, it is now known that certain groups of young people are more likely than others to become Excluded. Young people from families with low socio-economic status, measured through take-up of free school meals, comprise 45% of all those Excluded (Scottish Executive 2002), but comprise only 19% of the whole school population. The actual proportion may be even higher as it has been suggested that 20% of children do not take up their free meal entitlement (Zhang 2003). Over 80% of Exclusees are at secondary school stage, ages 13 to 15; Years 10 and 11 in England; S3 and S4 in Scotland. The vast majority of these are boys; a ratio of 9:1 in primary and 4:1 in secondary, according to one estimate (Munn *et al.* 2000). Other groups which are proportionately over-represented include those with learning difficulties; those from families with experience of multiple house moves; children from families which have experienced more ill-health, trauma and bereavement than the norm; children 'looked after' by the local authority; African-Caribbean males; school-age mothers; pupils who under-achieve or who have a low level of attainment, and children from traveller families (HMI 2001, DfEE 1999;10/99, Jordan 1998, Barnardo's 2000, Martin, Hayden *et al.* 1999, DfEE 1999, Booth 1996, Blyth and Milner 1994, Stirling 1992).

There has been much legitimate debate about the over-representation of some already vulnerable groups in the Exclusion figures. Although the high prevalence of males often

goes unquestioned, Riddell warns against an easy acceptance of this when she notes that, 'the greatest predominance of boys occurs in areas which are dependent on professional judgement as well as pupil behaviour' (1999;864). There is also some indication from pupils themselves that home address and a known family history result in an increased risk of Exclusion, for example, where less advantaged pupils attend school in more affluent areas (Munn *et al.* 2000). This focuses attention on the claims of Ball *et al.* (1997) that not all pupils and parents are positioned to make choices in the school quasi-market from the same starting point, materially or culturally. The likelihood of Exclusion may be seen as having less to do with one incident or one pupil's individual behaviour and more to do with other influences such as the family's social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997). Lloyd, Stead and Kendrick (2001) offer a reminder that it is often the combination of a number of risk factors which make Exclusion more likely.

There has been particular concern in the literature that male African-Caribbean pupils are up to six times more likely to be Excluded than their white counterparts in England (CRE 1997, Stirling 1993). With a much smaller African-Caribbean population north of the border and a higher proportion of pupils of South Asian heritage in the Scottish school population, direct comparison is not appropriate, but neither is complacency. It has been suggested by Blyth and Milner (1994) that bilingual pupils may, in fact, be under-represented proportionately in Scottish Exclusion figures and they suggest that a 'belief in the stereotype of the compliant Asian pupil may account for their apparent under-representation' (1994;295). Not only is this a concern in itself, it has implications for other identified groups. It is clear that Exclusion, then, 'is not seen as an inevitable consequence to a particular set of events, but as a product of a set of events dealt with in a particular way' (Hayden 1997;10).

Also raising great concern for this study is evidence which suggests that outcomes of Exclusion vary widely and are often dependent on a range of factors unconnected with the needs of the young person such as geographical location, local funding and management. Munn *et al.* (2000) talk about an 'overall impression... of schools responding in idiosyncratic ways to individual pupils showing behavioural problems'



(2000;23), echoing Imich's findings from a longitudinal study of Exclusions in a large local authority that, 'the consequences of certain pupil behaviours differ from one school to another' (1984;9). This finding is further reinforced by research (Cohen, Hughes *et al.* 1994) speaking directly to families of young people who had been Excluded from school. As one psychologist suggested to Lloyd and Padfield, 'The problem is shaped by what is on offer' (1996;184). In terms of an immediate impact on school career, research in Scotland by Cullen *et al.* (1996) reveals that most pupils who are temporarily Excluded are re-admitted to their own school and that most young people are Excluded only once and the length of time out of school is relatively short; typically a period of up to three days. Concerns remain for the 30% of pupils Excluded for longer.

For those pupils permanently Excluded in England, reintegration rates remain low, despite a growing number of studies which advise on ways of achieving successful re-integration. Although these numbers are a small percentage of the overall school population, this still accounted for more than 9000 young people in England in 2001/2002 (DfES 2003). Chazan (1994), Farrell and Tsakalidou (1999) and Lloyd and Padfield's (1996) findings reveal a continuing resistance to re-integration among mainstream teachers, particularly for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) or Social and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)<sup>2</sup>, who, as discussed earlier, may be seen as less deserving of help than pupils without any additional needs and also less deserving than pupils with other kinds of special need. These authors suggest that a very small number of long-term Exclusees are re-integrated successfully each year, and the number decreases with the length of time spent out of school, as well as the age and stage of the pupil. Lloyd and Padfield (1996) note that girls' reintegration is more likely to be attempted than boys', but, sadly, is no more likely to be successful. Blyth and Milner's findings (1994) suggest that many older permanent Exclusees do not return to mainstream education, and simply get lost in the system.

Appeals against Exclusion are unusual. While this may not be surprising, it is concerning. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most Exclusions which are appealed and

---

<sup>2</sup> 'EBD' is the term most common in England, while Scotland more often uses the term 'SEBD'.

which are won, succeed on the grounds that the Exclusion procedures are not followed rigorously and are therefore unsafe in legal terms. In other words, appeals are not won because the grounds are contested successfully in negotiation between pupil, parents and school, but because of technical mismanagement, uncovered by the authority itself. Leaving aside the question of whether or not a pupil or teacher would wish a return to school where relationships have broken down to such an extent that permanent Exclusion has taken place, this anecdotal evidence raises an important point in terms of the fairness of the appeal process.

The immediate consequences of Exclusion, therefore, give cause for concern, and this concern is further deepened when account is taken of research which has explored some possible longer-term effects. There is a body of research on the possible links between offending behaviour, non-attendance and Exclusion (Smith and McVie 2003, Martin *et al.* 1999, Hayden and Martin 1998, Devlin 1996, Boswell 1995) which suggests that there are common risk factors though, importantly, not a causal relationship. It is noted that the focus of research in this area is on deviance and trouble, mirroring the major themes of wider social research. While such research is essential, there is unfortunately little comparable data on those young people who do not go on to have such troubled adult lives, leaving a significant gap in the literature and in an understanding of Exclusion.

Although research has been able to suggest a number of ways in which to begin to assess the extent of behaviour issues then, this thesis argues that it is problematic that official Exclusion has become so widely accepted as the benchmark of troubled and troublesome behaviour. It is significant that interest in what we call 'exclusion from school' has focussed on mapping the terrain at this most visible, tangible level. As noted above, information has been gathered on the extent of official Exclusion, the reasons that young people become Excluded from school, the characteristics of those Excluded and the outcomes and consequences of these Exclusions. Much of this is acknowledged as very useful data.

However, this interest in disciplinary Exclusion represents only one of a range of possible perspectives on the issues of exclusion. There is no intrinsic inevitability about its centrality. Rather it reflects a wider set of political and social concerns, and even within this focus prioritises some areas of interest over others. In England, for example, there has not been nationally available data on recorded reasons for official Exclusions, although Scotland has published this data for a number of years. A further difference lies in the level of information gathered. Scottish local authorities are required to collate information from schools not only for permanent ('exclusion/name removed from the register') Exclusions but also for temporary Exclusions. English authorities may argue that the size of the much larger pupil population precludes such a level of analysis, but it may also be argued in response that they are prepared to undertake such an exercise annually for purposes of monitoring pupil performance in formal examinations. Again, whereas in Scotland information has been collated on stage of schooling, gender, ethnicity, any special need, length of Exclusion, whether the child is 'looked after' by the local authority and whether it is a first such incident or not, these details have only been included as additional tables for the first time in 2003 in the English statistics (DfES 2003). Reliance on individual schools to self-report may itself be problematic, and scrutiny at this level may also be seen as evidence of greater state intervention, but it has also arguably provided a more far-reaching accountability and a fuller picture of disciplinary Exclusion.

There must also be concern about the way in which attendance targets were 'tacked on' to a set of specific targets for reducing Exclusions set by the then new Labour Government in 1997. Although there are good reasons to consider more closely the reasons underlying a rise in authorised and unauthorised absence from school in recent years, and the characteristics of those involved or differences across schools, the national data can address none of these questions. Although there is some variation in the information recorded, there is no UK wide data collated on age, stage, gender, ethnicity, any additional need for support for learning and so on. Despite the rhetoric of inclusion, again, there seems to be some essential data missing which would enable a more accurate

picture to emerge. It is with this note of caution that the official data on Exclusion is now reviewed.

English statistics reveal that there was a significant and steep rise in permanent Exclusion rates in the 1990s; from 2,910 in 1990 to a peak of 12,700 in 1996/97 (DfES 2001), with similar rises in rates of non-attendance. The most recent figures suggest that levels of Exclusion and non-attendance are beginning to stabilise slightly below this figure (Scottish Executive 2003), though such figures have long been regarded as an under-estimate. Northern Ireland's system has much in common with both of these countries, though it has also been seen as 'less punitive and more balanced' (Parsons 1999;33). It is important to note that statistics continue to be gathered and reported in different ways across the countries of the UK, in different legislative and cultural contexts, and concerning different features of official Exclusion, which makes accurate comparison difficult.

There is a good deal of variation in the levels of Exclusion across the UK and within different local authority areas. Scotland has historically had a lower Exclusion rate than England, and though Scottish statistics reveal a rise over the same period, it was neither as steep nor as large proportionately. Differences in rate of increase in Exclusion across the UK are considered by Munn et al. (2000), who suggest that, 'Lower [E]xclusion rates in Scotland may be partly explained by the less vigorous application of quasi-market principles to schools and the resistance of the Scottish education policy community to those that were invoked, which in turn may explain the lack of legislation' (2000;38). Recorded Exclusions are highest in the London boroughs and these figures, according to Parsons (1996), are high enough to suggest that Inner London Excludes the equivalent of one in 130 pupils. Of grave concern is the suggestion made by Stirling (1992, 1994) that official Exclusion figures are a significant under-estimate of the actual total and that temporary or 'fixed term' exclusions continue to account for approximately eight times the number of official permanent Exclusions (Parsons 1999).



While Exclusion is seen as a serious matter in all these countries, only to be used as a sanction of last resort, Scotland has developed what may be viewed as a less formal, more low-key overall set of approaches than found in England (Table 1.1).

*Table 1.1 English-Scottish legislative differences on Exclusion*

	England	Scotland
Types of Exclusion	Permanent	Exclusion
	Fixed term	
Length of Exclusion stipulated?	Yes – 45 days in one school year	Maximum one year – at education authorities' discretion. Local policy varies
Governors/school board members involved?	Yes – must approve permanent exclusions, receive representations and instruct on terms for excluded pupil's reinstatement	No - headteacher or other senior member of staff usually have responsibility for Exclusion; devolved from local authority
Permanent Exclusion accepted?	Yes	Yes
Parents/carers' right of appeal	Yes – to local authority, and to judicial review	Yes – to local authority and to sheriff
Local authority behaviour support plans mandatory?	Can make representation to governing body	No – guidance on key features of policy and practice
Parental rights of choice of school affected?	Yes – after pupil has been permanently excluded from two schools	No

*(adapted from Munn et al. 2000;38)*

In England, the definitions of 'permanent' and 'temporary' Exclusion are enshrined in statute while in Scotland definitions are set out in the Scottish Executive Circular (8/03) referred to above. The right of appeal, too, is different, with recourse to the sheriff in Scotland, but to the higher, again more formal, level of judicial review in England. As can be seen from Table 1.1 above, there are also some other key differences. In Scotland, the power to Exclude rests with the local authority, though usually delegated to the school, while in England, Exclusion remains legally the responsibility of each head teacher. Local autonomy for head teachers and school governors is valuable, but it may also be argued that this local control has contributed in part to higher rates of Exclusion as individual head teachers come under pressure to maintain their school's place in the academic 'league tables' published annually. Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland no longer publish this information nationally and, while pressure is growing to end this policy in England, no change has yet been announced.

While it would not be appropriate to suggest that these differences in themselves have resulted in differing levels of official Exclusion, they do indicate the distinctive nature of the cultural frameworks within which Exclusion procedure operates and is understood in each country. Although it is difficult to draw any but the most general of comparisons, then, it is still the case that the countries of the UK have a continuing and shared concern about the severity of behaviour problems in schools and about the need for stringent formal procedures to deal with these problems.

A consideration of the recorded reasons for official Exclusion and the statistics on anti-social behaviour in schools (Scottish Executive 2003, 2004) reveals that contrary to some claims from the media and ambivalence from within the teaching profession itself (Wright and Keetley for NASUWT 2003) reasons are still only rarely associated with major incidents of violence. 'General and persistent disobedience' is recorded as the most common reason for official Exclusion in Scotland, accounting for about one quarter of the total. The next most common reasons are related to verbal abuse of staff and physical abuse of pupils by other pupils (Scottish Executive 2003). Blyth and Milner (1994) draw attention to the apparently minor reasons often given for Exclusion; a theme also explored by Parsons (1999) and Munn *et al.*, who note that, 'some of the reasons given are striking for their seeming triviality given the emphasis on Exclusion as a last resort to troublesome behaviour' (2000;20).

In a series of attempts to understand this, and recognising the distance between what an official form can record and the reality of what is often a much more complex series of events, a number of studies consider reasons for individual incidents of Exclusion in more depth (Imich 1994, Parsons 1996, 1999, Hayden 2001, Booth and Ainscow 1998). These studies reinforce the view that Exclusion is only rarely related to a single traumatic or violent incident. Hayden (2001) suggests that difficult peer relations feature in more than 80% of official Exclusions but it seems that a number of factors converge to bring about an incident of Exclusion, including the relationship between teacher and pupil (Cullingford and Morrison 1996), and significantly, the so-called 'drip, drip' effect of



continual low level disruption. Teachers report that this low level disruption is the most difficult to tackle (Johnstone and Munn 1997) and this raises some significant and urgent questions. Firstly, in terms of thinking about Exclusion, it raises a question about possible links between peer difficulties, the insidious effects of low level disruption and the seemingly trivial (Munn *et al.* 2000;20) recorded reasons for Exclusion. This in turn draws attention to a larger question about the appropriateness and effectiveness of much Exclusion practice. Secondly, it highlights an issue, identified by a number of writers, about the contingent and variable nature of the relationship between unofficial and official Exclusion (Munn *et al.* 2000, Fletcher-Campbell 2001, Kinder *et al.* 1997, 2000). There is, for example, as yet only a small body of literature on characteristics of high and low Excluding schools, but McLean (1987) and McMillan (2000) have provided evidence that, although socio-economic status continues to be the most important indicator of likely Exclusion levels, some schools can confound expectations and can 'make a difference' (Rutter *et al.* 1979, Sammons *et al.* 1997, Cullen *et al.* 1996).

Research such as this often refers to the way in which rises in official Exclusion may be understood as an inevitable response of a system under enormous pressure to produce a continuous improvement in standards within the education quasi-market. However, it also reveals the inadequacy of the dominant interest in official Exclusion. Although I would argue that the mass of information gathered about official Exclusion and non-attendance is undoubtedly useful, as long as this is taken as the most significant signal of problems of behaviour in schools, it raises significantly more questions than it is able to answer. I would argue that different levels of data required from schools in terms of non-attendance and Exclusion reveals much about society's continuing concern with overt threats to order and its lack of concern about broader behaviour issues and experiences of exclusion.

Booth asserts that 'By yielding the definition of a complex social phenomenon to those who frame legislation we limit our scope for understanding and responding to it' (1996;21). Only some forms of behaviour problem result in official Exclusion, and then only some of the time, and in some schools. It seems possible that this pattern is repeated

for non-attendance though further research is urgently required to confirm this. Low level disruption, which may not always lead to Exclusion, is but one example of other, more subtle, challenges to normative behaviour which make the relationship between schooling, young people, behaviour and discipline such a complex but necessary area of study. Alongside the official process of Exclusion there are many more covert ways in which the process of 'defusing' and 'nurturing attitudes...consonant with participation in the labour force' (Bowles and Gintis 1976;9) is seen to take place in ways which may be understood as hidden exclusion as opposed to official Exclusion.

### **Unofficial and Hidden Exclusions**

Having highlighted the difficulties associated with a simple reliance on official Exclusion statistics, I turn now to a consideration of a much smaller body of literature within this field and to examine the major themes which emerge from the literature on hidden exclusion. Although many commentators agree that hidden or internal exclusion is a feature of many schools, there is still too little research which documents practices such as unofficial sending home, pupils sitting outside a teacher's room or in the corridor for long periods and withdrawal of permission to participate in school events. There has also been concern (Gordon 2001) about the prevalence of informal meetings between school staff and parents at which it is suggested that it might be in a pupil's interests to find another school before an Exclusion occurs. The central difficulty raised by such practices, and it is one recognised by the Scottish Executive, is that, if it happens often for an individual pupil, then it both denies that pupil an appropriate education, and denies them and their families a legitimate right of appeal against that loss of education. Parents may not believe how often a young person can be out of class. Individual subject teachers in secondary school may not have access to information about larger patterns of internal exclusion, and there is no obligation on schools to keep documentary evidence about such action.

Hayden *et al.* (2000) report that a common, significant factor mentioned by troubled children is the 'work' and the level of the work set. This is often construed as meaning that the work is too difficult, and, by implication, that those who have difficulties are mainly drawn from a group of less 'able' pupils. When ability is still often thought to be innate and therefore immutable, the implication is that schools and society can do little other than offer some form of compensatory support for those individuals affected. There is still debate about the extent to which learning difficulties may be the root cause of behaviour problems; for example, while OFSTED (1996) reports that 'very few [E]xcluded pupils are of above average ability', the National Autistic Society has expressed concerns about the number of high achieving autistic young people who are Excluded (National Autistic Society 2001). However, the re-emergence of setting as the norm in primary and secondary schools has raised again the question of whether that segregation, apparently on the basis of academic ability, is often in fact a segregation by social class (Carbonaro and Gamoran 2002). Lamb (2000) suggests that it is the least self-assured and most marginalised who derive least benefit from setting and streaming, and who may find themselves increasingly disengaged.

These concerns about the curriculum and the organisation of learning also link to concerns about the kinds of knowledge which schools teach. Dyson's critique (1997) of the inaccessibility and exclusivity of the National Curriculum in England also raises questions about social class and the ways in which social class positions all society's members in 'different relations to knowledge' (Connell *et al.* 1982;188). In a development of the quasi-Marxist arguments, Connell *et al.* argue that schools teach and value abstract, written knowledge, and that this is far removed from the more practical knowledge of 'real-life problems' (1982;188) that is valued and taught, orally, in working class families. Connell *et al.* (1982), Hatcher (1982) and Mortimore and Whitty (1999;85) among others, argue that schools are dominated by middle-class values and middle-class ideas of what is worthwhile knowledge, and that the disaffection of some pupils is a consequence of this.

Other writers have drawn attention to another central priority of education today, 'The cult of action and success' (Calinescu 1987;41) and the ways in which this 'governs the paths of action which appear to be open to us' (Levitas 1998;3) in terms of thinking about behaviour in schools. This 'cult' has given rise to a growing tension between competing aims in education, with the polarisation of the traditional tasks of schools to provide pastoral care on the one hand and to provide opportunities for academic achievement on the other. Although the gap in educational attainment has narrowed in the last century and although children from poorer families are now doing better in national exams (Rahman 2000), it is also the case that the overall poverty gap has widened again in the last twenty years and that there is a growing gap between academic attainment of high and low achievers (Glennerster 1998). Low socio-economic status is still the largest single determinant of academic success, of heightened risk of disciplinary Exclusion and of unauthorised non-attendance. For Riddell (1999), Hatcher (2000) and Ball *et al.* (1997), this gives rise to a legitimate concern that the dominance of the school improvement agenda has contributed to the recent increase in the attainment gap by serving the interests of those already better placed to take up opportunities, and not those who suffer social and economic disadvantage. Blyth and Milner (1994), Stirling (1992), Vulliamy and Webb (2000) and others have argued that an increase in behaviour problems is related to the impact of devolved school management over recent years and the amount of new legislation in education in the last two decades, the large number of significant changes in all areas of the school curriculum and the rapid rate of these changes (Poppleton and Riseborough 1996). So too, the growth of interest in neurobiological explanations and the 'new disabilities', such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) (Lloyd and Norris 1999), dyslexia and dyspraxia has sometimes been felt as an additional pressure, rather than as an additional support to the work of teachers in schools.

It has also been suggested that the continuing trans-national drive for a standardised curriculum and the aims of achievement for all, combined with the raising of the school leaving age, have gradually eroded an essential flexibility in the educational system and, at the same time, added to the increased pressures on staff and pupils. Paterson (1999)



argues that this flexibility enabled schools to respond more pragmatically to the lives of pupils and issues of their varying attendance, their social and community life or acute family needs. Increased rates of both official and hidden Exclusion, then, I would suggest, are not only related to rises in relative poverty, but may be understood as one inevitable consequence of tighter controls on education, as more young people are forced into a system that is less able to respond to diverse and local community needs.

### A Broader Conception of Exclusion?

Clearly, the issues raised by 'work' itself, by setting within schools, by the particular shape of the curriculum and the tension between competing aims in education, may affect many more pupils than those who offer overt challenges to authority. Much less is known about other kinds of behaviour issues and unofficial exclusions, but it has been widely suggested that official Exclusion data mask much higher national levels of unofficial exclusionary practice in schools (Lawrence and Hayden 1997, Booth 1996, ACE 2001, Cohen, Hughes *et al.* 1994, Cullen *et al.* 1996, Parsons 1999, 1996, Imich 1994; Stirling 1992, 1993). While internal or hidden exclusion may not be a new phenomenon, it has also been suggested that the recent stabilising or reduction in levels of official, disciplinary Exclusion is directly related to increasing levels of hidden exclusion (Munn *et al.* 2000, Slee 1998, Parsons 1999, Hayden 1997) as much as to Government sponsored 'alternatives to exclusion' initiatives.

Therefore, alongside concerns about discipline which focus on class or order or cultural capital, there is still a continuing search for understanding about the nature of exclusion. In view of the disproportionately high number of male Excluees there is one further major set of arguments about schooling which help to 'impose some order on the complexities of our lives...to "unrandomise"' (Ballard 1995;1) the problems of exclusion, seen as a function or perhaps dysfunction of the way society works. A growing clamour about male underachievement has emerged in recent years. For some commentators, this has illuminated a contrast with the lack of problematisation of Exclusion as a predominantly male experience. It has raised anew questions about the



gendered experience of schooling and of behaviour problems in general. Amid this recent upsurge in public concern about perceived male underachievement in education, Osler and Vincent (2003) and Weiner *et al.* (1997) explore how this has been interpreted as male disadvantage; something they describe as the new moral panic. They suggest that female success at secondary school stage is seen as a 'corollary to male failure' (Weiner *et al.* 1997;620), although there is little evidence that female success has been bought at the expense of boys' failure. The concern about the rise in official Exclusion rates in the 1990's then, is construed as part of broader concerns about male underachievement as well as, or perhaps as part of, society's way of responding to the perceived danger and risk of overt male challenge.

However, Weiner *et al.* make a further set of distinctions which also reflect usefully on the arguments made by the quasi-Marxists. They distinguish between public concern about middle-class male under-achievement, portrayed as a result of complacency, and working class male under-achievement portrayed as a threat and potential economic cost to society. According to this argument, as long as the majority of Excluees continue to come from families with low socio-economic status, the inevitability and necessity of exclusion in its broadest sense, and official Exclusion process in particular, will continue to be presented as rational, and the seemingly paradoxical disempowerment and rejection of some males in a male hegemonic society thus explained.

The arguments made by those concerned with issues of gender reinforce once again the need to recognise that there has been a particular focus within society's concerns about behaviour problems in school, and that there are inevitable consequences of such a focus in terms of what is illuminated and what is thrown into shadow; in terms of limiting the kinds of understandings possible and the kinds of responses which are seen as acceptable.

The underlying messages in much of the research are about threat and danger, risks and costs. These are seen as urgent and unavoidable concerns that take precedence over any other behaviour issues. It is interesting that while the characteristics and risk factors associated with Exclusion have been shown to be well documented in the literature, there

is much less research into what have been termed 'protective mechanisms' (Rutter 1996), 'stress resistance' (Hayden 1997) or 'resilience' (Schoon and Bynner 2003). There has been relatively little interest in the findings of Lloyd-Smith and Dwyor-Davies (1995) and Hayden *et al.* who argue that being out of school is a risk factor for other undesirable outcomes and that being in school 'can be a protective factor' (Hayden *et al.* 2000;13). Other such protective factors have been usefully identified by the Mental Health Foundation (Bird 1999) and include the following,

'a resilient temperament, being intelligent, a warm affectionate relationship with at least one parent, parents who provide effective supervision, pro-social beliefs, consistent discipline and supervision, parents [who] maintain a strong interest in child's education, good housing and standard of living, school with strong academic and non-academic opportunities'  
(1999;3)

It seems that this area of research has much to contribute to a broadening of perspective on behaviour issues and exclusion in general, but has yet to be fully utilised. Such an exploration, however, may have direct implications for a deeper understanding of the marginalising experiences of young people as individual pupils in schools and the sense of turbulence in schools in the UK as a whole.

There is now a need to develop more finely nuanced perceptions of behaviour problems in education and a corresponding recognition of the stratified or layered experiences of exclusion noted by Stirling (1992), Booth (1996), Parsons (1996) Connell *et al.* (1982), Hayden (2000) and Dyson (1997). The need to explore why and how society responds to the overt challenges of disruptive, often male, pupils in schools will continue to be necessary, but by naming such exploration in this way, it acknowledges the need for more and different emphases in understanding. The very fact that other threats, whether understood as threats to moral order, to society or to male hegemony, are rarely openly violent and more often insidiously disruptive, and that, as noted earlier, teachers find such behaviour the most difficult to tackle, suggests that official Exclusion is a poor and simplistic response to a complex issue.

It is unfortunate, then, that discussion of more subtle challenges to normative behaviour, seen to be a lower risk or threat to society, has been largely relegated to the margins of research, and viewed as the concern of specific groups such as those interested in gender, race or disability issues, which in turn, reflect and compound the marginalising experiences of many young people. I suggest that, taken together with the arguments made by the quasi-Marxists and the functionalists, these commentators at the margins reveal the limitations of the research to date and provide a powerful argument for new directions in research.

Exclusion as a complex, multi-layered issue requires analysis which holds argument about structure and agency in balance. It must acknowledge the importance of the individual actions and relationships of young people as pupils within the complexity of power relations in school (Foucault 1977, Cullingford and Morrison 1996, Allan 1999, Carlen *et al.* 1992) but it must also seek greater recognition of the interplay of different powers and a fluidity in the balances of power (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, Reay and Wiliam 1999). It may usefully take account too of Giddens' notion (1981) that although structure constrains agency, different factors mitigate the relationship between the two. While not denying the influence of large organisations and hierarchies, Foucault's notions of power offer an essential fine focussing, when he says, 'Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away' (1978; 94). His notion of 'capillary power' provides validation of an exploration of how young people themselves may influence and direct their circumstances, of how, in the classroom, for example, they contribute to the atmosphere, they engage with the work or contribute to discussion, all of which relate closely to the 'drip, drip' low-level disruption which so troubles teachers.

## Key Issues and Concepts arising from the Literature

### The Context of School Experience

In order to take full account of the context of experience for young people in schools, attention now turns to the complexity of power relations in school. I suggest that the issues surrounding exclusion are central to many larger debates in education and draw attention to Fullan's analysis of the problems facing education in general as it tries to cope with the 'juxtaposition of a continuous *change theme* with a continuous *conservative system*' (1993;3 original emphasis). The pressures on schools when they are simultaneously required to seek continuous increases in levels of academic attainment and also decrease the number of troubled and troublesome young people placed outwith mainstream have been acknowledged. However, Hayden (1997) and Parsons (1996) point out that economic efficiency is also often in conflict with an emphasis on the importance of staff morale, flexibility, workload issues, and the quality of learning for all. While this is seen as an issue for all schools, for some less popular and 'successful' schools the conflict may be greater and Hayden warns, 'One of the clearest criticisms of the effects of a quasi-market in education is the evidence that it does not promote an equitable access to, and distribution of resources...in a competitive system someone loses out' (1997;7).

Within the Exclusion process itself and responses to behaviour issues in general, there is also a significant tension which derives from the way in which such processes call upon a diminished understanding of discipline in schools and, related to this, a diminished notion of the agency of the individual young person. Turning first to discipline in schools, I suggest that this issue is central because it offers insight into the relationship between different kinds of exclusion. It asks questions about punishment in schools; its perceived purpose and its relationship to the use of official Exclusion as one of a range of sanctions available to school management. It includes debates about competing interpretations of the behaviour and motives of the disruptive pupil. It highlights the links between discourses on safety, protection and discipline in the officially sanctioned grounds for

invoking the Exclusion process. It draws attention to the meanings and practice of discipline in schools, and the tension between authority and authoritarianism for all pupils, not only for those seen as disruptive.

One of the most immediate concerns in this context must be with the difficulty of challenging what has become the accepted meaning of discipline; the ways in which schools have evolved their understanding and practices of discipline, and the place official Exclusion process has within that. Talking of statutory, legal punishment, but in ways which suggest interesting parallels with disciplinary Exclusion, David Garland suggests that its

‘role in modern society is not at all obvious or well known... That it is not always perceived as such is a consequence of the obscuring and reassuring effect of established institutions, rather than the transparent rationality of penal practices themselves... once a complex field of problems, needs and conflicts is built over by an institutional framework in this way, these problematic and often unstable foundations disappear from view’.

(1990;3-4)

Garland talks of institutions such as punishment as having ‘created a sense of their own inevitability and of the necessary rightness of the status quo’ (1990;3). Even were the aims and effectiveness of official Exclusion not so closely bound up with questions of discipline, punishment and power, the analogy would be powerful. The ‘institutional framework’ described by Garland with its ‘necessary rightness’ implies a solidity and strength which disarm those who would seek to question it. It is understandably rare, therefore, to hear more than a cursory discussion of why schooling in this society has a process such as Exclusion.

Garland (1990) also notes that most discussion in this field has been about how to improve the institutional framework, rather than radically alter it. Where Garland notes that much discussion is dominated by talk about how to *improve* the running of prisons, how to *increase* diversion from prosecution, it is possible to see parallels in the educational policy concerns to *reduce* Exclusion and truancy rates, and to *increase*



behaviour support and alternatives to Exclusion. The Government's ALTEX initiatives, the 'Safer Schools, Safer Cities' project, early intervention policies and many others, all seek to *decrease* the number of people excluded from society by being excluded from education. The talk is dominated, then, by relativism rather than absolutes. It is concerned, as Wrigley says, with 'instrumental rationality (how to do things right) and not so much with substantive rationality (how to do the right things)' (2003;95 parenthesis in original). Mintzberg describes this as the difference between creative 'adhocracy' and professional bureaucracy; 'One engages in divergent thinking aimed at innovation; the other in convergent thinking aimed at perfection' (1979; 436). The notion that education is working well when it is 'neat' and well-ordered seems to underpin much current thinking, but as MacBeath points out, 'conflict, dilemma and ambiguity are...at the very centre of learning, individual and organisational' (1999;9).

This emphasis on 'how to do things right' is reflected in the huge growth of interest in whole school 'performance' and 'quality improvement' and the proliferation of instruments for measuring performance across all schools. In terms of whole school responses to indiscipline, its influence may be seen, for example, in the 'assertive discipline' approaches advocated by Canter and Canter (1992). Such approaches have often been welcomed by many schools, with their clear staged system of rewards and sanctions applicable to all pupils. However, in the same way that the school improvement movement has been criticised in the past for failing to take adequate account of context, Canter and Canter call upon a view of the child as having control over his or her situation, and the power to choose to be 'bad' or 'good', paying scant attention to broader social differences such as those outlined earlier.

I suggest that in order to understand exclusion more clearly there is a need to reconceptualise discipline in school. The literature suggests an equally urgent need to consider the notion of pupil agency in this context. The invocation of the Exclusion process rests on the assumption that young people in schools always have the individual choice to be 'bad' or 'good' and their having made the choice to be 'bad'. However, this assumption about agency seems paradoxical within a system which is otherwise only

rarely interested in the agency of pupils, and which, I will argue, is not structured to promote active pupil agency or stronger constructions of discipline. The incongruity of the call upon a notion of pupil agency is reflected in the ways schools seem to borrow the procedure and formality of the legal system but without being able to adopt the tenet of 'innocent until proven guilty'. It is, for example, accepted practice to inform parents of an Exclusion by official letter, often recorded delivery, although, significantly, recorded delivery letters are rarely used nowadays except by the courts or in business. This takes no account of home literacy levels. The fact that a re-admission meeting takes place at a time arranged by the school, that the meeting takes place in the school itself, that a written contract between pupil and school management is often signed before re-admission is permitted, all imply a presumption of 'guilt' and a very particular power relationship between the pupil, pupil's family and the school. It may then be more helpful to talk about 'institutional Exclusion' and 'structural social and emotional and behavioural difficulties' where Exclusion is understood, as discussed earlier, as being less to do with an individual's behaviour and more a reflection of an increasing inflexibility in the school system.

Rouse also draws on the work of Foucault, who noted the shift in 'the scale and continuity of the exercise of power, which also involved much greater knowledge of detail' (1994;94). The detail of knowledge amassed, Foucault argued, allowed much greater control. 'Detail', 'knowledge' and control are all notions which seem to translate easily into the daily life of most secondary schools in the UK today; twice daily registration, period attendance via computer analysis, toilet passes, late slips, behaviour sheets, regular, controlled, long timed periods of work and short periods of rest, lining up for classes, not eating or drinking in class, fully supervised areas of study and a common curriculum, warning bells and period bells, closed circuit television (CCTV), study contracts and so on. The very fact that these are features common to so many schools across the UK supports Foucault's view that normalisation on this scale is about an increased ability to control. He offers the phrase 'disciplinary space' and suggests that,

‘Its aim [is] to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communication, to interrupt others, to be able to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits’  
(1977;143).

Even for pupils without any additional difficulties this concern with power and control leads to a large amount of minutiae recorded on each young person in school.

Foucault (1977) extends this discussion to talk about a shift from power being invisible (God, the Church) to being highly visible and audible, and although, as I have suggested above, it is important to emphasise how this affects the whole of school life, for those excluded in some sense, there may be more specific ways in which this is experienced. The ‘disciplinary gaze’ is often manifest in a detailed inventory of disruptive or inappropriate behaviour, ready to be called upon as needed; the written record as ‘power/knowledge’. For those whose behaviour puts them at risk of disciplinary Exclusion, the accumulation of a detailed record also has a power to control, if not the behaviour of the young person then at least the likely outcomes of that behaviour. While no-one would disagree that recording a pupil’s progress is in the interests of all, it seems disingenuous to suggest that some kinds of recording serve only a benign purpose. For young people who may be excluded in a broader sense, it is surely significant that they too are often the subject of a similar ‘disciplinary gaze’. They often have personal files as ‘thick’ as those of Excluees and sometimes as wide a range of contacts with other professionals. For all of these young people, the detail gathered through this kind of surveillance is enormous, the opportunities, as I have suggested, to step beyond the boundaries of the ‘norm’ greater, and intervention or retribution more easily justified.

It is important to be aware of this context when considering the powers which act to support the young person who steps beyond the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that all young people should be consulted on decisions which affect them directly and the previous Guidance on Issues Concerning Exclusion (C2/98) in Scotland referred explicitly to the UN Convention, stating, albeit on the last page, that all young people should be offered the chance to

express a view and for that view to be taken into account before an Exclusion takes place. As noted earlier, the more recent Guidance on Exclusion (C8/03) is much more formal and, I would argue, erodes the support it offers to those Excluded. One significant example of this lies in the reference to consultation with pupils. In the earlier Guidance it was advised that consultation should be part of the process of Exclusion, but the newer Guidance notes that such consultation should take place in the case of an appeal against an Exclusion. This undermines the importance of dialogue and negotiation in general by moving it to much later in the process. It restricts the obligation for consultation to a much smaller number of cases, as very few Exclusions are appealed and effectively further distances the 'disruptive' from the 'disrupted'.

While it may be argued that it is difficult to make consultation at the point of Exclusion meaningful, the premise which underpins it; that of respect for young people in general, was an important step forward for policy. Although this consultation is one of the few formal opportunities Excluees have to speak and to be listened to, it is interesting to note that there is no monitoring of whether schools actually do seek the views of pupils in these situations, nor whether pupils take up that opportunity, nor whether, if they do express a view, this has any influence on subsequent actions of schools.

There is no doubt that there are occasions when for the immediate physical safety of all, it is better that a pupil be removed from a situation. However, it has been noted that many Exclusions are related to pupil-pupil conflict, to difficulties in peer relations, and that some seem to be for relatively minor incidents, though such findings lack the newsworthiness of more lurid headlines. Research is urgently needed which can challenge what may be seen as the individualising and 'privatising' (Troyna and Vincent 1996) process of different kinds of exclusion which so effectively rob the pupil of the opportunity for challenge.

Exclusion reveals itself to be a complex issue. It is important, then, for this research not to be led, or indeed misled, by the issues raised by the troublesome boys who dominate national statistics. They are, of course, a significant part of the landscape of exclusion.



However, their presence must not blind the study to other possible significant features. It may be that those who suffer hidden and wider exclusions are more socially excluded than previously recognised, or it may be that those who experience hidden forms of exclusion show more resilience (Schoon and Bynner 2003), more ability to cope with an inflexible education system (Wrigley 2003) than those who become officially Excluded. Then again, it may be the case that some young people are always on the way from one kind of exclusion to another, in some kind of escalator system (Hargreaves 1979), and if so research will benefit from a deeper understanding of the characteristics and connections between these different kinds of exclusion.

This research recognises that exclusion and failure at school close off one very important route to qualifications and the doors that these open to future choice. It also recognises, as discussed earlier, that young people may construe their behaviour as rebellion, and yet, at a macro level, that same rebellion and responses to it may be exactly what society intends, as it marks the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and, at the same time, enculturates and prepares each section of society for its appointed place in the labour market. This study recognises the need, however, to understand the experience as immediate experience, not simply in terms of the 'time-future' (Hood *et al.* 1996) of young people. It is also interested in the possible paradox that troubled and troublesome young people, rather than fulfilling a stereotype as resisting, reactive or passive, may often be making sensible, creative, preventative choices, some of which might include official or unofficial exclusion from school.

### Including the Generality of Pupils

One essential aspect of this research is the interest in the views of young people, both those excluded and the generality of pupils. In terms of research in the field of exclusion the focus has been on the detrimental aspects of the exclusion process, the problems, the deviance of the young people involved. This research is interested in what happens to understanding of behaviour issues when excluded pupils are viewed as young people



first, and excludees second, and when the views of different groups of young people are set alongside each other as equally important contributions to knowledge.

One of the two official reasons for Exclusion in Scotland is that,

‘the authority consider that in all the circumstances to allow the pupil to continue his/her attendance at the school would be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school or the educational well-being of the pupils there’

(C 8/03)

For many teachers this translates as the ‘need to think about the other 29 in the class’. There is, then, a set of assumptions about the detrimental effect of the disruptive behaviour of a minority of pupils on the learning and social relationships of the majority. These assumptions are so powerful that they validate the most serious response which a school can legitimately make to disruptive behaviour. Yet the literature has shown very little interest in the view of that majority and actually reveals very little about how the generality of pupils understand and experience exclusion. It may be that many pupils are profoundly affected, for example, by indiscipline and disruption in schools and that raises one set of questions. On the other hand, the widespread fear that the well-behaved majority suffer may not be borne out. The views of the generality of pupils may reveal a disjunction between the ‘folklore’ of disruption and direct personal experience. If this were found to be the case it would raise quite a different set of questions for current policy and practice. It is vital, then, that this study does not overlook this but begins to map the experience of the generality of pupils. By combining a focus on those excluded with a focus on the generality, the study permits an exploration of how far these various assumptions and possibilities are reflected in the lived worlds of young people.

### A Framework of Layers of Exclusion

In order to clearly frame these suggested ways of understanding exclusion, a visual model has been developed based on the work of Margaret Stirling and her concern that official Exclusions for indiscipline are merely the ‘tip of the iceberg’ (1992;128). Although

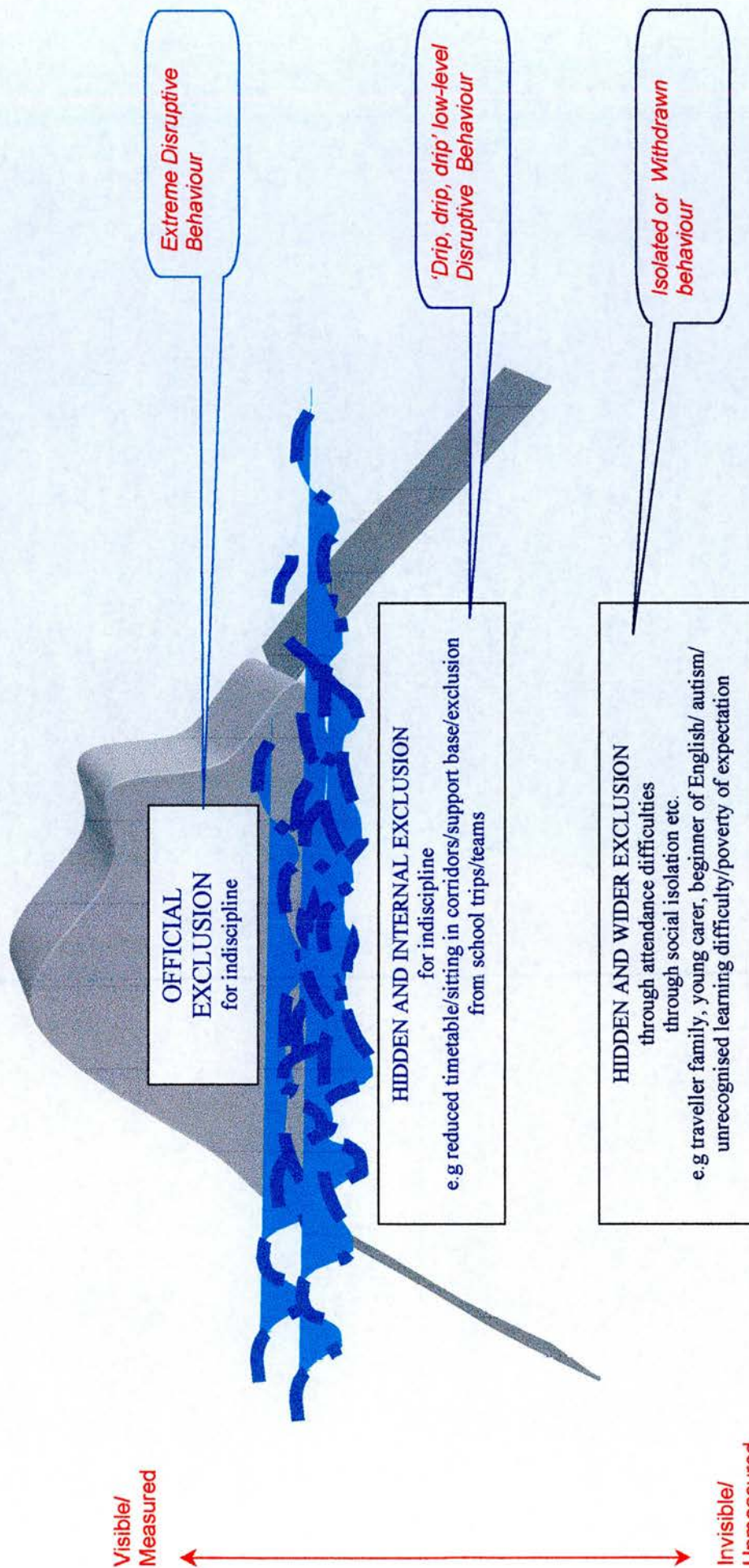
necessarily an over-simplification, the model attempts to delineate the exploration in this study of the various 'layers' of exclusion in and from school (Figure 1.1). The term 'layer' is intended to convey a sense of the relationship between that which is visible, open to scrutiny, recorded in official statistics or considered most closely by policy; and that which lies beyond or beneath this, as yet hidden from view. The framework sets out and at the same time challenges present understanding of exclusion and the way in which this has been dominated and diminished by the political emphasis on formal measures and measurement, and by that which is visible and vocal.

Official Exclusion is shown as the visible part of the iceberg, but, just as the tip of the iceberg may be a warning of much more ice beneath the surface, this thesis asserts that there are other kinds of exclusion, often less visible and accessible to the outsider, less easily measured, quantified and monitored. The layer just beneath the surface represents those who present discipline problems to schools but who are not (yet?) Excluded. They may be sent out of class on a regular basis, may spend time in a behaviour support base, or standing outside the head teacher's room. They may be barred from participation in Craft and Design classes or Home Economics or school trips for safety reasons. Their parents and carers tend to receive letters expressing 'concern' about behaviour. They are well known to senior school managers with responsibility for discipline. The monitoring and surveillance of their behaviour is often of a high level, resulting in 'thick' personal pupil records, but it is internal to the school and may be recorded in quite individualised ways in different schools.

The final layer represents those young people in schools who are often described not as 'troublesome' but 'troubled'. They often present as withdrawn or socially isolated or disengaged. They may have unrecognised learning difficulties or be children of travelling families or have attendance issues because of home care responsibilities. They may be beginners of English. They too present a challenge to schools, though not in the traditional sense of the word. They are often perceived by schools as having quite different needs from those who are disruptive.

**'The Exclusion Iceberg'**  
(after Stirling 1992)

# Exclusion in the Mainstream School





Finally, the stark outline of the iceberg which separates it from the surrounding sea represents a definition of the perceived boundaries of exclusion; its contrast with ordinary or typical pupil experience. This framework, then, is intended to identify common understanding and prioritisation of different kinds of exclusion in schools. It does not suggest that this accurately reflects more or less traumatic pupil experiences. This study is not an exercise in proving one group or groups to be more excluded or having greater needs than another group, but the framework of layers of exclusion does seek to challenge distinctions made on the basis of presenting behaviour alone. It considers the current separation of different groups of vulnerable young people on the basis of 'needs talk' (Fraser 1989;161) in need of closer examination. As Foucault notes, 'need is also a political instrument, meticulously prepared, calculated and used' (1977;26). It acknowledges, too, that in the field of special needs in particular, categorisation has been an area of legitimate debate and challenge (Dyson 1998).

In choosing to work with a framework of 'layers of exclusion' the research is also mindful of the danger that over-reliance on any such framework can lead to misinterpretation or blind the researcher to some features because they lie outside the framework (Fulcher 1989). It is understood that the terms 'excluee' and 'the generality' are useful but that in reality are unlikely to be mutually exclusive and that the categories may overlap. This in itself is of interest because of the way it may challenge current definitions, and as suggested earlier, allow discussion of the balance of structure and agency in the event and processes of exclusion.

This research study uses the notion of layers of exclusion outlined above to ask if high levels of unofficial and hidden exclusion are a feature of schools; and if so, whether the experiences and behaviours associated with these hidden and internal exclusions, are, as might be assumed, less serious than those which result in official process. It is also interested in whether these behaviours seem to be indicative of less serious underlying problems, or if the picture is in fact more complex. It will seek to do this in the light of

concern about the seemingly 'minor reasons' for official Exclusions and the reduction in rates of official Exclusion.

Adults, as professionals or academics or parents, may consider that there are distinct and different balances in the way that the structures of schools shape the experiences of young people within them. There might be assumed to be a kind of sliding scale of pupil agency, with official Exclusion being the point at which the power of the pupil to make choices is weakest. It might be assumed where the process of official Exclusion is not invoked and there is a greater degree of informality, there is greater opportunity for pupil choice, for adult flexibility and negotiation between the two in terms of decision-making. The framework of layers of exclusion allows discussion of an exploration of these balances of power, an opportunity to make practical comment on discussion earlier of Foucault's notion of power as 'dynamic' and 'capillary' (Gutting 1994) and on Giddens' (1981) notion of the relationship between structure and agency.

All of the above sets a context for the design of the research study and also for a decision to focus on the perspective of the young people themselves, both the excluded and the generality. Within the literature to date, the voices of teachers and other professionals have most often been heard. This study offers the opportunity to explore exclusion by using the voice of the pupil as a 'lens' through which to examine these experiences, and suggests that this may be one important way to include them in the debate from which they have, ironically, often been excluded. I have argued that there is significant oversimplification in current understanding of exclusion from school, and that 'exclusion' must now be re-defined both more broadly and in greater depth. This study will explore some of the major assumptions and gaps identified in the literature but does so through the eyes of those most directly affected.

I have suggested that the present shape of the body of literature on behaviour and exclusion means that a great deal of data is available on some particular areas of the issue and that this has given rise to an impoverished understanding of exclusion and a one-dimensional view of the issues surrounding it. However, there is clearly much in the



literature which forms a foundation on which to construct a stronger conceptual framework of exclusion, one which takes account of its multi-layered complexity; which recognises unofficial exclusion as a potentially widespread and serious problem, and official Exclusion as but one facet or layer of exclusion in schools.

Despite its limitations, the literature on official Exclusion offers a starting point for discussion and usefully adumbrates some of the questions which urgently require clarification. The links between poverty and official Exclusion, for example, are well-known and this suggests that it should be a central question in any exploration of other forms of behaviour issues and other forms of exclusion. The finding that males are perhaps four times more likely to be Excluded than females at secondary school level raises a similarly urgent question about the gendered nature of disciplinary Exclusion and how this might link to other layers of exclusion within schools. The particular focus of research on non-attendance, and its links to 'truancy', 'risk-taking' and offending behaviour, continues the dominant interest in areas which seem to offer most threat to schools and society, but also raises as yet unanswered questions about patterns of non-attendance, underlying reasons, characteristics of non-attenders, the gender balance, longer term consequences and so on. Finally, the small but growing body of research into alternatives to Exclusion suggests that the relationship between official Exclusions and hidden or internal exclusion is a complex and variable one.

The research on hidden and unofficial exclusion associated with behaviour issues also raises more questions than it is able to answer. It lacks the national sweep of data collated on official Exclusion and non-attendance over time. It often lacks even the few contributions from direct contact with young people and their families to be found in the literature on official Exclusion. It has been suggested that national targets on attainment and official Exclusion have had a deleterious effect on levels of hidden exclusion, but research is urgently needed to explore this further. The way in which society understands and defines the term 'exclusion' cannot be a starting point for research but becomes a central purpose and question in this research.

The brief discussions of discipline, power, class and gender above help to define the urgency of the need for a new questioning of exclusion, and official Exclusion as one part of that. Garland warns that, 'We need to remind ourselves, again and again, that the phenomenon which we refer to, too simply, as 'punishment', is in fact a complex set of interlinked processes and institutions, rather than a uniform object or event' (1990;16). This seems equally true of 'exclusion', and suggests the usefulness of a notion of 'layers of exclusion' as a tool with which to frame an exploration of the experiences, understandings and perceptions of these issues and to gain a fresh and necessary perspective on these issues through listening to young people themselves.

## **Research Purposes**

The purposes of the study can be translated into five main research purposes, as follows:

1. To explore how young people, both excludees and the generality, understand and experience exclusion in mainstream secondary school.
2. To explore how young people, both excludees and the generality, understand the place of exclusion in the context of their wider experience.
3. To develop appropriate methods of listening to and consulting with young people on these sensitive issues.
4. To test whether or not the notion of 'layers of exclusion' stands up when tested empirically.
5. To consider how an understanding of pupil experiences may broaden and deepen our understanding of the current practice of exclusion.

## **Research Questions**

These broad purposes are set out in detail below:

*For young people who experience official Exclusion from school*

- How do young people who have been officially Excluded from school experience this?
- How do such young people construct their experience and contextualise it in relation to the rest of their school experience, academic attainment and achievement, their personal interests, life chances, careers plans, social and personal identity?
- What do they understand of other experiences of different kinds of exclusion?

*For young people who experience hidden or unofficial exclusion*

- How do young people who are often 'in trouble' but not officially Excluded experience this?
- How do young people in this situation construct their understanding of this experience and contextualise it in relation to the rest of their school experience, academic attainment and achievement, their personal interests, life chances, careers plans, social and personal identity?
- What do they understand of other experiences of different kinds of exclusion?

*For young people who experience a wider sense of exclusion*

- How do young people, who may not be disruptive, but who may be seen to be excluded in a broader sense of the term, experience this?
- How do young people in these situations construct their experiences and contextualise them in relation to the rest of their school experience, academic attainment and achievement, their personal interests, life chances, careers plans, social and personal identity?
- What do young people in this situation understand of other kinds of exclusion?

*For the generality of pupils*

- How does the general school population experience disruptive behaviour in school, in terms of their learning and social relationships?
- How do they experience and understand official Exclusion?
- What does the generality of pupils understand of different kinds of exclusion?

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

I assert that there are new and urgent questions to be asked about exclusion from school. I suggest that the dominant academic and policy interest in official Exclusion process associated with indiscipline has provided a very necessary but ultimately impoverished understanding of a complex and fundamentally important issue for young people and their schools. This narrow scope of interest has led to the neglect of other forms of exclusionary experience in and from school, and done little to challenge the individualisation and pathologising of such experience.

This study focuses not only on those troublesome to school authorities, about whom research can offer much information, but suggests that there is much to learn by exploring their experiences alongside those about whom far less is known: those young people who may be excluded in some broader sense; and those often perceived to be most deeply affected by disruption in schools; the generality of pupils. Underpinning the focus of the study is an awareness of the large number of competing influences on young people in schools, and I have identified three sets of ideas which help to frame the research questions and to interpret the findings to come. These are centred on meanings of discipline, on power and knowledge and on identity, and gender in particular. I suggest that discipline, in the sense most commonly used in schools today, shapes and is shaped by the ways in which schools respond to challenging behaviour. I also suggest that exploration of the sites of power, the flows of power, in young peoples'

relationships, can help to make sense of the tensions, but also the successes in young peoples' lives. Finally, I suggest that there is a need to ask much more searching questions about the continuing lack of interest in the gender imbalance in official Exclusion rates, and to explore how this may be understood in the context of the gender balance in other kinds of exclusion.

The design of the research is based on direct contact with young people, seeking their views about experiences and perceptions of exclusion in the context of their whole school experience. In choosing to prioritise both the individual interview and the focus group as methods of data collection, I intend to make use of the advantages of each to explore these issues in different ways. The focus on voiced research is an acknowledgement of the imperative of including the views of young people, and particularly excluded young people, in this area of research; an area from which their voices have, ironically, been too often missing. It is recognised that this focus has implications for the design and methods adopted in the study, in a research culture which has as yet only limited advice to offer about both the ethics and the practicalities of such a venture. It is intended that the questions explored in all the meetings with young people, and the ways in which these questions are explored, confirm the value of an ongoing engagement with young people about issues which affect them directly.

This study is not concerned with permanent Exclusion as this is widely documented elsewhere in the literature. It is concerned to explore other experiences of exclusion in and from school, including temporary Exclusion, and how these experiences might relate to each other. It is interested in the experiences of young people who may be on the margins but who are, significantly, not beyond the margins of mainstream schools. It considers not only how they experience their exclusion or marginalisation but also what prevents their further marginalisation. In a departure from many previous studies on Exclusion (Padfield 2002, Pomeroy 2000, Stirling 1992, 1994, Hayden 2001, Imich 1994, Hamill and Boyd 2002, Parsons 1996) it focuses not only on those who are troublesome to schools. It builds on work by Collins 1996, Cullingford and Morrison 1996, Booth 1996, Lloyd-Smith and Tarr 2000, Lloyd 2002 and Pye 1988 which have, in



different ways, questioned contemporary positivist, reductionist definitions of exclusion. Crucially, the study also explores the experiences of those assumed to be most affected by disruption; the generality of pupils. By listening to the voices of a range of young people in secondary school, the study seeks to clarify the imbrications and the distances between these young people and gather their views on responses made to their perceived needs. These voices will illuminate experiences of exclusion and deepen an overall understanding of the lives of troubled and troublesome young people and their peers and the effects of 'trouble' on themselves and others. The primary interest of the study is in experiences of exclusion but it is concerned to understand these experiences in the context of other school experiences and in the lived worlds of young people. It has an interest in 'trouble' but also in exploring successes and where these lie. It seeks to problematise the significant and continuing gender imbalance in rates of official Exclusion and to explore young people's views about this imbalance.

This study about exclusion from school, then takes up a new challenge and has a distinct set of questions. As a researcher working within the interpretative paradigm I am concerned to make clear my own standpoint on these ideas and my views as to how these ideas shape the research itself. I reject the idea that research can be value-free, neutral or only 'informative' (Hammersley 2003) but, rather, agree with Clough and Barton that 'research does not merely address or discover the objects of its inquiry, but...it begins to create them from the first moment of identification of a topic' (1995;3). I view this statement as a cogent reminder of the need for the researcher to be vigilant and reflexive. Similarly, I reject the suggestion that this study can discover the reality or 'the truth' about exclusion or how it 'truly' works (Guba 1990) but I do intend that the findings will add to the body of knowledge in a significant way. I also reject the post-modernist claim that all accounts have equal value but suggest, with Craib (1997), that 'we might not be able to find an absolute truth, but we can distinguish between better and worse knowledge claims' (1997;6). The emphasis laid on the importance of listening to the voices of young people in this study is a call to value this knowledge more highly, to see it as offering one of the 'better' claims to knowledge. This is recognised as unavoidably political but seen as necessary in order to redress a balance when one definition of the notion of exclusion has become so all-pervasive. Following Dyson (1998), I suggest that

the role of the researcher is to seek out alternative versions of experience which open up possibilities for understanding and hence for questions and action, an idea explored in more depth by Lather as 'catalytic validity' (1986; 272). This view of the role of the researcher provides the rationale for the research design which is now discussed in more detail.

## **Voiced Research with Young People**

The questions which arise from a review of the literature might be approached in a number of different ways. Traditionally research within education (Lloyd-Smith and Tarr 2000, Borland *et al.* 2001), has relied on the views of parents, teachers and other professionals as proxy informants to tell us about the issues. The research has been aimed at academics and policy-makers and, to a lesser extent perhaps, teachers. This study takes up the important challenge of gaining insight into exclusion through a focus on the experience of young people, by listening directly to their own views and opinions and feelings.

Recently, in the UK and beyond, there has been growing concern about the rights of young people in general and the right specifically for their views to be heard. This is reflected in the UK Government's acceptance in 1992 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Children Act (1989) in England, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act (2000) and in the Scottish Declaration of Human Rights (1998) which has as one of its major principles, 'The right of the child to be fully consulted and to have the child's interests as a primary consideration in all decisions affecting the lives of children'. In terms of official Exclusion from school, the Scottish Guidance refers specifically to Article 12 of the UN Convention and states that 'the child's point of view should be represented and taken into account in decisions which affect them directly' (C8/03;12).

There is, then, a political shift in understanding of the place of young people and a strengthening of interest in the notion of young people as citizens in their own right, as 'recipients of policy in practice' (Pomeroy 1999;466) rather than merely citizens of the future. It is heartening to note, in this context, the recent upsurge of interest in the views of young people as a relevant and constructive contribution to the evaluation of policy and provision (Borland *et al.* 2001, France 2000). The public profile of this political interest may be seen, for example, in the major survey undertaken by *The Guardian* (5<sup>th</sup> June 2001) as a contemporary follow-up to 'The School that I'd Like' (Blishen 1969).

In addition to growing political pressure, Mahon *et al.* (1996) identify two further sets of pressures which form an important part of developments in thinking about the place of young people in research. They suggest that social pressures, including changing family patterns, mean that it is not appropriate to 'rely solely on information about family structure and status to tell us how children experience their families and through them, their wider social worlds' (1996;147). Less convincingly perhaps, they argue that an unexpected benefit of the marketisation and growth of consumerism in education is the need to listen to the views of pupils as part of a market's need to listen to the consumer. However, McDonald (1999;203) makes a much more effective argument about the influence of the consumer society and the place of voiced research with young people. Talking of the 'detraditionalisation' (Baumeister 1986) of western society and a post-modern concern for loss of certainties, he says that this context entails a need to recognise that 'for many young people marginalised by globalisation, their identities can no longer be constructed within the imagery and culture created by producers and employers' (Bendle 2002;3).

This research study takes place in the context not only of these political and social changes but at a time of growth in academic research interest in the perspectives of children and young people. Although such research has often been on the small scale and comprises a very small proportion of the larger literature on matters related to exclusion, this is slowly changing. As noted earlier, there has been research which explores pupil views on learning and school effects on learning (Osler and Osler 2002, Reay and Wiliam

1999, Chaplain 1996, Rudduck *et al.* 1996, Cooper and McIntyre 1993) and interest in young people's perceptions of how they learn in school (Duffield *et al.* 2000, Blatchford 1996, Chaplain 1996, de Pear and Garner 1996). There has also been work in the area of peer relationships and teacher/pupil relationships (Woods 1990, Crozier and Antiss 1995, John 1996 and Cullingford and Morrison 1996). There has been a more extensive amount of work on areas surrounding truancy and exclusion in general (Pomeroy 1999, Cohen, Hughes *et al.* 1994, Kinder *et al.* 1997, Cullen *et al.* 1996, Hayden 1997, Osler 1997, Garner 1995, Wood 1997, Munn *et al.* 2000, Troyna, Hatcher *et al.* 1992). Although these commentators often vary in their viewpoints quite substantially, they share an implicit or explicit commitment to the value of listening to young people.

It is encouraging that policy and research have turned their attention to this important area and much useful work has been undertaken. It is notable however that research on exclusion has been selective and has often immersed itself in the same areas of interest as wider educational research; with studies on deviance and troublesome behaviour and disability; with those in some sense 'outwith' the public idea of the norm, and with underlying assumptions about the need for change or improvement. Research on exclusion has also inevitably been shaped by the way in which research on children and young people in general has, in the past, been influenced most clearly by developmental psychology and 'welfarism' (Hendrick 1994). Hood *et al.* suggest that the former has 'focused mainly on adult interests and on the time-future of children: for instance,...cognitive development and skill (rather than children's knowledge and experience)...Research has been done on children, not with them or for them' (1996; 118). It has been suggested that research has been limited by seeing children as 'vulnerable incompetents or threats' (Hood *et al.* 1996;118).

However, recent research on the sociology of childhood (see for example, Qvortrup *et al.* 1994, Mayall 1994, James and Prout (eds.) 1990, Burman 1994, Woodhead 1990) is helpful in the sense that, in thinking about the importance of the pupil voice, it develops the concept of young people as a separate minority social group, who may have different interests and values from their home, parents, school and teachers. In an obvious sense

this research study shares these concerns, and openly advocates a concern with the hidden nature of marginalised groups in a market-driven society. The literature tells us comparatively little about types of exclusion other than the official, or how these might be changing, or about the views of those understood to be affected by the disruption often associated with official Exclusion; although commentators seem to agree that there are many different kinds of exclusion which form the overall picture. This research starts from a position that views present understanding of the term and concept of 'exclusion' as limited and limiting; and asks how the perspective of young people, both the excluded and the generality might act as a lens through which to view these concepts anew.

There are many reasons why this growing concern with active consultation should be taken seriously. Listening to the voices of young people offers direct access to an experience not accessible in any other way. Research which makes direct contact with young people also offers a richness of texture and an immediacy which acts as an important counterbalance to the bald statistics about truancy, exclusion and indiscipline as they appear in the popular media. These voices and views of young 'stake-holders' are valuable. They are worth hearing in themselves and 'worthy of study in their own right' (James and Prout 1990). This concern has evolved alongside a reassertion of interest in agency and a view of young people as 'creators' and 'social actors who are active in creating themselves in different social contexts' (France *et al.* 2000;131).

This research offers something new and valuable in three significant ways. Firstly, it gathers the views of young people commonly assumed to be adversely affected by disruption, together with the views of those who are excluded because of their disruptive behaviour, and also with the views of those who are understood to be excluded but not disruptive. This suggests a complex web of relationships, but one, I would argue, that is typical of the turbulence of experience in schools today. Often these different kinds of marginalisation have been considered individually, as constituent parts, but here these experiences are brought together so that they may be explored in relation to one another. Secondly, and related to this, the research offers something new in that it seeks the views of the generality of young people on the issues of disruption and exclusion and examines



these alongside the experiences of those identified as excluded in some sense. Thirdly, the research is valuable because, in the development of the focus group as a method of data collection, it aims to marry theory and method of inclusivity; by gathering the views of research participants based on groupwork methods which are themselves premised on inclusive ways of working with people. As Clough and Barton suggest, 'how we choose to research a subject is itself constitutive of its subject' (1995;3).

It may be argued that there remains a question about the validity of 'experience' as a basis for knowledge production. The dominance of evidence-based research, measurable outcomes, the need for expert views, are all in direct tension with a valorisation of 'experience' and in particular the experience of those who are not yet adults. By emphasising the value of listening to young people and their reflections on experience, this study sees itself as part of a necessary challenge to the way in which concerns and views of young people are still more commonly seen as part of the 'backdrop' (Reay and Wiliam 1999;344) of the social context of policy and provision. However, such emancipatory interest or 'educative' research (Gitlin and Russell 1994) has been questioned by Clough and Barton (1998) who seek to problematise professional methods as well as research itself. Their questioning of the power relationships in research seems pertinent, but, as Dyson (1998) argues in response, this should lead research to an examination and continuing scrutiny of roles and methods in working, not to an abandonment of such work.

One of the specific ways in which to encourage a greater reflexivity in this area of research is to listen to the voices of those being researched, though there are acknowledged to be difficulties with this approach. Dyson (1998) argues that the terms 'voice' and 'story' are often assumed to have a commonly understood meanings but that in fact their meanings are not transparent. He points out that participants may not see themselves as belonging to the group assigned by the researcher and that research may talk about 'voice' but within a group there may be many voices and these may be competing or contradictory; 'For every voice heard, another is silenced' (Dyson 1998;10). Rudduck *et al.* offer a reminder of how important it is to listen not only to

those who reach out to have their views heard but that we should also listen to ‘the less effective learners who are most likely to be able to explore aspects of the system that constrain commitment and progress’ (1996;177). However, Moore and Muller are critical of voiced research and argue that, ‘crucially, “voices” imply *hearers* as well as speakers...the key question to be asked whenever we encounter the notion of “voice” is not only who is speaking, but who is hearing – or more accurately, reading?’ (1999;194 original emphasis). The emphasis on ‘hearers’ is part of a dismissal of voiced research by the authors, and perhaps by implication, a rejection of the notion of the negotiated construction of research. However, extending Dyson’s earlier response to Clough and Barton (1998), it may be argued that, rather than abandon the quest for new truths and thus lose a unique set of contributions, such criticism should increase researcher self-awareness and rigour in presenting research as ‘heard’ and as negotiated. While Bernstein warns of the dangers of ‘recontextualisation’ (1990), Lather views this not as a drawback but as one of the most positive aspects of such an approach when he says that this ‘dialogical relation allows both participants to become the ‘changer and the changed’ (Williamson, in Lather 1988;570).

Seeking the views of young people has been seen as increasingly important then in the context of policy making and research, but this research also has a much more immediate social and physical context which shapes the design of the study. The meetings with young people are also meetings with pupils in schools. I may wish to emphasise that they are young people first and pupils second, but it is also necessary to recognise the complex tensions in their identities. The meetings take place in school and in a schooling system which, it may be argued, provides few structured spaces for young people to reflect on their experiences without this being tied to curricular requirements.

These issues all help to focus the study but are also part of its challenge. There remain important questions about which excluded or marginalised voices are heard, and it would be dishonest to suggest that all voices can be heard equally clearly in this study any more than in any other. However, I would argue that in opening up the possibility of these groups having voices that should be heard, this opens research to the idea that there are

other voices, other tales still to be told. I can say that there are more voices to be heard than have previously been acknowledged. I assume that these are oppressed voices while acknowledging that it is research that has named this as their position, but I also suggest that the breadth and variety of methods of approach to data collection discussed in detail later, are an attempt to counter this oppression.

The challenge in this research study is all the greater because part of it involves finding ways to elicit the opinions and everyday experiences of young people in a research culture which has no strong tradition of this (Hill *et al.* 1996, Alderson 1999, Morrow *et al.* 1996), and where few research studies offer a relevant discussion of the practicalities and ethics. There is a further challenge in that most literature on exclusion focuses, as noted earlier, on the detrimental aspects of the exclusion process, the problems and the deviance of the young people involved. I am interested in what happens to current understandings of these exclusionary experiences when the starting point is a notion of excludees as young people first and excludees second. Through a focus on the pupil voice, both the excluded and the generality, I have stated that I hope to understand more of the wholeness of young people's lives and the place that issues related to exclusion may have within that. It is intended that involvement with the research itself will foster or reinforce a positive self-image for young people whose views are worth hearing and valid in their own right.

## **Research Method**

These are large questions and it is important to be clear about the limits of this research. This is a qualitative study, though it also makes some use of quantitative analysis. The fieldwork and discussions take place in the context of the Scottish education system and more specifically, publicly provided mainstream secondary schools in one urban local authority. This is a small-scale study, based in four secondary schools with recognised good practice on issues of Exclusion.

## Case Study

The approach is based on case study methods, but also draws on elements of ethnographic research with its the emphasis on the importance of the pupil voice, and encompasses and values 'portrayal of events in the subjects' terms' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000;78). It also draws on elements of critical ethnography in asserting the validity of interpretivism; the need to recognise the role of the researcher, the impossibility of neutrality, the acceptance of a negotiated or shared construction of reality and the need for the democratisation of research. As previously discussed, it seeks to be empowering to participants with its view that they are young people first and excludeds second. It does not however, seek to assert the young people's views to be closer to truth or 'telling it like it is', but rather, that theirs is a necessary and until recently, missing perspective on the complex issues of exclusion. The study is on the small scale, exploratory and offering rich, 'thick' (Geertz 1973) description.

The decision to adopt a case study approach is based on a number of factors. The main strengths of the approach lie in the opportunity to focus closely (Hakim 1993); to 'probe deeply and to analyse intensively' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000;185), and for that analysis to be accessible and vividly realised. This fits well with a focus on voice and the voices of young people on a topic of such sensitivity. It is of particular relevance, too, in a study where the intended audience also includes young people who have a range of reading abilities and a range of interests.

A different but equally influential reason for choosing case study, is its ability to act as a counterbalance to the main thrust of research on exclusion and related issues. Most interest in the issues of exclusion, as noted earlier, has been underpinned by a notion of 'defective student pathologies' (Slee 1998) on the one hand, and by concern with measurement, quantification and standardisation of process on the other. Although case study has increasingly become part of research in the field, it has often been a 'follow-up', focussed on those young people who have already been 'measured, quantified and standardised' by the system, most often because they have been permanently Excluded from school or diagnosed as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties



(SEBD). This case study involves direct contact with individual young people and individual circumstances and experience, with a lower public profile; who have not been under quite the same intensity of 'disciplinary' gaze. The contact is made with them, not with an aim of standardisation, but of exploration. It is a searchlight which enables the 'spotlight or microscope' (Hakim 1994;61) to usefully find its focus.

Case study research has been criticised by Yin on the grounds of a 'lack of rigor' and for offering little basis for scientific generalisation' and because it 'take[s] too long and...result[s] in massive, unreadable documents' (1994;10). However, it seems that while such criticism may fairly be made of bad case study, it could equally be applied to any poorly conducted study, quantitative or qualitative. Slee has also pointed to some potential pitfalls of case study in that it can be 'driven by the observation, description and calibration of attitudes and behaviour' (Slee 1998;444).

Its unique advantage, on the other hand, is in the way that it 'makes explicit the cognitive and cultural aspects' of its focus (Kemmis 1980;118-120). The gathering of 'multiple sources of evidence' (Robson 1993;144) on the context of the school lives and learning and teaching of the research participants allows the study to maintain a breadth and length of focus that take cognisance of the deep structure and the broader cultural aspects of the case while also having a genuine interest in 'how it feels'.

At the planning stage, there were many questions about how to define and 'bound' the case. This is not a study of those young people who have been permanently Excluded from school. As noted previously, their experience has been widely documented elsewhere, both nationally and internationally. Neither is it focussed on those young people in alternative provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Because the focus, unusually, is on wider meanings of exclusion than official permanent Exclusion for indiscipline, the challenge of clearly defining the case is a serious consideration. As discussed earlier, it has been relatively easy in the past to define the case of exclusion by limiting interest only to permanent Exclusion. The



difficulty here was to define a tight enough case where there is relatively little in the research which might provide an equivalent clear starting point or outline.

There is an associated challenge in defining the case where it does not seem to be neatly bounded by being only about the meaning of official Exclusion, but is also about the event and process of different kinds of exclusion. For Stake (1995) this would be problematic. For him, 'events and processes fit the definition [of a case] less well' (1995;2). Recognising this, I borrow from Goffman's (1959) concept of 'career' of the mental patient. Wallace *et al.* (1998;79) suggest that, 'Its value is its "two-sidedness"; one side linked to the development of image of self, self-identity, and sense of future, while the other concerns the progress of the individual through institutional time as well as her or his movement within the hierarchical structure of the institution'. Though it is important for the case to be clearly defined, then, it must also make space for the recognition of the multi-facetedness of the 'careers' of these young people's lives.

Stake suggests that 'Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (1995;xi). This research values the uniqueness of each young person and their contribution as an individual to the research, and thus the study is indeed a study of particularity. The issue of complexity, justly highlighted by Stake in his definition, is translated in terms of these particular young people's 'careers' in school, specifically in terms of their understanding of exclusion in their particular schools. While agreeing with Stake that 'events and processes fit the definition less well' (1995;2), the complexity of this case is such that in focussing on young people's understanding it must include questions about their understanding of the events and processes of different kinds of exclusion. The case is bounded by being about exclusion in one particular arena; the urban mainstream secondary school. It focusses on specific young people in four different secondary schools, and in this sense reflects Stake's notion of the 'collective case study' (1995). These schools were chosen in order to explore the extent to which there might be a commonality of experience, or indeed a difference in experience or understanding of exclusion, depending on whether a young person is a pupil in a high or low Excluding

school. As previously discussed, these young people were selected because they occupy specific, different, but equally key positions or vantage points from which to comment on the central issues. These vantage points mean that there is much to learn by asking about their understandings. Their contributions are valuable because they are particular and unique. Their contributions are also valuable because, taken together, they speak of common understandings as well as singular incidents.

The study does not seek to be generalisable in any statistical sense but, in Bechhofer and Paterson's (2000) terms, it does seek to be analytically generalisable by questioning current assumptions about the experience of exclusion; 'to the extent that a case study illuminates and develops theory, we may treat it as generalisable' (2000;49). It builds on the body of knowledge about exclusion. It adds and compares the known information with the new so that in these terms the study can be said to aim for 'naturalistic generalisation' (Stake and Trumbull 1982). In this broad sense too, the findings, at this level, are intended to offer generalisations 'about an instance' (Bassey 1999;22) and 'about an instance to a class' and though the schools selected, the young people chosen as participants, may not be representative in a strict sense, their selection permits discussion of the extent to which they might be representative, or in which direction further exploration and questioning might usefully lie.

### *Ethics*

The nature of this qualitative, research involves careful consideration of ethical issues throughout the study. The Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA 2003) and Glasgow University Centre for the Child and Society's 'Code of Practice for Research involving Children' (no date) provided the basis for consideration of these issues. Hitchcock and Hughes' 'Some Ethical Rules for School-based Research' (1995;51) also acted as a useful guide because of the site of the study.

In terms of access, permission was sought through the local authority and then from the schools directly. The local authority was informed in writing of the aims, objectives and

intended research design and methods. The authority was also notified of the particular schools intended for inclusion in the study, with an explanation of how the schools were selected. This formal notification followed a meeting with a senior official of the local authority education department where agreement was reached on the above. Before agreement was sought with the individual schools, all head teachers were contacted informally to see whether or not a more formal approach would be favourably received. The same information relating to aims, objectives and intended research design and methods provided to the authority was sent by email to each of the head teachers following this initial approach, with a covering letter explaining my willingness to be contacted by phone or letter should further discussion or information be required. Assurances about confidentiality and anonymity were given at this stage. It was recognised from the outset that the very act of seeking permission for research in such a sensitive area for schools could lead to difficulties. Wary of the dangers of a resentment by schools at a feeling of intrusion, every effort was made to ensure that the schools were genuinely open to involvement, before seeking formal permission.

Permission was also sought from both potential participants and their parents and carers, through contact by separate letter to each. In addition, two question-and-answer style information booklets were devised; one aimed at staff and one for potential participants. As the participants were all under 16 years old, it was made clear that involvement would not be able to proceed if the parent or carer withheld approval. It was stated, and reiterated throughout direct contact within the study, that continued involvement of young people was voluntary and discussions confidential; with the proviso that if anything emerged which might raise questions of physical or emotional harm this would be passed on to school staff. The right to end involvement at any time or to miss out any activity or question was stressed. Interviews were tape recorded where permission to do so was received from participants. Seeking an appropriate response to issues of open and closed research and again based on a belief in the need to respect the young people as participants, the emphasis was on openness and informality. While, for instance, letters home were kept deliberately informal and non-technical so that they might be readily understood by a full range of readers (including instances where young people would

have to read for their parent/carer), they also sought to be clear about aims and purpose of the study. At the start of individual contact, time was set aside to explain the researcher's identity, purpose, process involved and expectation of time involvement. They were told that the final study would be fully anonymised, both for the school and the young people as participants. This may, ironically, be perceived as overly formal and an impediment to the development of a rapport and 'reality of experience' sought through the study. However, it was hoped that the informal approach within the contacts would act to counter this.

Young people were informed that they would be sent a written copy or tape copy, according to personal preference, of their own interviews, to allow them the opportunity to alter transcripts of their individual interviews. Efforts to 'democratise' the research by encouraging participants to alter or make comment on transcripts may seem problematic to some. It may be argued that such an approach can compromise an accurate representation of the data gathered. However, Smith and McVie (2003) in their wide ranging review of the reliability and validity of self-reporting with regard to crime, give grounds for support of this approach, and in what may offer an interesting analogy with official Exclusion, suggest that 'there is no alternative method of describing most offending, and other measures (such as conviction) are even more defective' (2003;178).

One further, though quite different, argument in support of this democratisation comes from Jean Rudduck, who notes, 'Students have a lot to tell us about their experiences of learning; they are observant, analytic, and on the whole their voices are constructive and not oppositional' (2001;7). My own past work with young people as a groupworker and as a teacher has led to an awareness of their general ability to be self-critical and honest, perhaps sometimes even too harsh on themselves. This is seen as part of a larger issue about the worth of young people as direct contributors to research, and part of the larger set of research questions seeking to explore effective ways of talking with and listening to young people on a sensitive issue of direct concern to them.



### *Validity and Reliability*

Bassey (1999;74) says that validity and reliability are not vital concepts in case study research. However, there are good reasons for considering issues of validity and reliability with great care here. Lincoln and Guba (1985) talk of the importance of an 'audit trail' and Stenhouse (1988;52) talks of a 'case record', but whatever term is used, there is a need to maintain a full and accessible record of the research as one way of encouraging researcher reflexivity and a sense of the wholeness of the study. It is also hoped that the transparency of an audit trail allows others to validate or challenge the findings and the ideas explored within it (Bassey 1999;61). The audit trail in this study comprises the interview transcripts, the focus group fieldnotes and recordings, the observation notes and documentary analysis and also a journal based on a guide outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994;50).

Seeking reliability in qualitative methodologies includes 'fidelity to real life, context and situation specificity' according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000;120). Lincoln and Guba (1985;108-9) suggest that 'prolonged engagement in the field' provides a measure of reliability through 'dependability' or 'trustworthiness'. They also suggest the need for 'persistent observations in the field' and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000;120) see these as useful safeguards against the common criticism of qualitative researchers that they respond only to the 'loudest bangs and brightest lights' (Guba and Lincoln 1985; 289). In this study, with its exploration of possible different layers of exclusion there is a conscious attempt to challenge such perceptions of the qualitative researcher and to listen to those who might be making no more than what might be described as the 'quietest murmurs'. Reliability was also sought through the overlapping foci of instruments of data collection. Within the focus groups the range of activities and discussions was intended to allow the young people to explore and revisit these themes from a number of different perspectives. In both interview and focus groups, there was recognition of the need for a balance of open and closed questions, and a mixture of the general and the specific.

Triangulation seems to offer a useful response to questions of validity and reliability but I would argue that here its relevance is less certain. The research sets out to interview individual pupils, to listen to the informal chat of young people, to meet with focus groups and to undertake documentary analysis, all with a view to understanding in more depth what is meant by 'the experience of exclusion'. However, there is no intrinsic confirmation or explication offered simply by doing all these things. Miles and Huberman (1994;266) usefully pose this notion of content validity in the following way; 'If they do contradict...you are stuck with a deeper question: Which do you believe?' This seemed to be a highly relevant question in a study where different groups of young people, with different perceived status in schools, were involved. Although I have argued that views of young people in general have not been taken as seriously as they should, it is also true that some young voices are heard more often and taken more seriously than others. I would suggest that within the emerging research culture of consultation with young people, there is a danger that some may be seen as 'more equal than others'. It is necessary, then, to state an unequivocal rejection of this notion of triangulation in this sense.

For this research, the purpose of seeking data from all these sources was not within-method triangulation then, but the need to provide a context in the search for meaning and to recognise the importance of such a context. This is especially important where the case, as discussed earlier, is not bounded neatly by being about one major event in all instances, but is about the event and process of exclusion. Validity, then, becomes concerned with the need to be true to the contact with the research participants. In terms of construct validity, there is a conscious challenge to the popular concept of exclusion, a challenge to the relevance of a reliance on national 'league tables' and selective measurements.

The ethnomethodological concerns of reflexivity and indexicality are also of particular relevance in the light of the earlier discussions about the theoretical basis of the study and choices made about site, settings and methods and a general concern with the 'ways in which actions and statements are related to the social contexts producing them; and to the way their meanings are shared by the participants but not necessarily stated explicitly'

(Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000;25). This was important in considering how young people were situated in the school context and in relation to the researcher, to other adults, to each other. Allied to this was an interest in the ways that the young people might attempt to 'research the researcher' (Epstein 1998) and how this may be understood as part of the larger concerns of reflexivity.

### *The Researcher as Instrument*

This concern with reflexivity, with self-awareness and the need to continually review the relationship between the research and the researcher, also includes an awareness of the importance of my own personal characteristics, of myself as a 'research instrument' (Kvale 1996;147). I have to maintain a vigilance of how these characteristics; as a white, middle-class, able-bodied female in her late 30s, influence the research. All of these characteristics have influence individually and also together, as they would in any research. However, there are features of this particular study which necessitate that some aspects must receive even closer attention than usual. Hitchcock and Hughes offer a reminder of an obvious but necessary consideration; that concepts of "seniority" and "youth" are factors that do seem to have a particular significance in schools' (1995;165) in terms of power differentials. Similarly, because gender is one of the identified problematics of exclusion in this study, it is necessary to be especially aware of the ways in which my own gender may form part of any interaction in meetings with young people and in listening to their views. Then again, perhaps one of the more useful aspects of the fact that I have a different accent, dialect and vocabulary from some of the young people involved is that this may allow the research to 'hear' and distinguish differences and explore them more readily.

## Research Design

The design envisaged a study based in four schools across one urban local authority area. In discussion with the local authority a range of schools with good practice on Exclusion was identified and then two schools with low Exclusions rates and two with relatively high Exclusion rates were selected from within this list. As described later in greater detail, these schools share some important characteristics but each also has its own individual character and approaches. By using pairs of schools in this way it was hoped that some comparison of pupil experiences in different schools could be undertaken. It is sometimes assumed that the experience of a pupil in a high Excluding school differs from that of a pupil in a school with lower levels of disruption, although Munn, Johnstone and Chalmers found evidence that pupils in different schools 'had more in common as pupils than distinguished them as members of particular schools' (1992;118). This aspect of the design also offered the opportunity to explore this unexpected finding more closely.

Selection of pupils as potential research participants was in some ways more difficult. The framework of 'layers of exclusion' both outlines and challenges current perceptions of pupil 'needs' and appropriate responses. It was not adequate, therefore, to select a sample of young people based on the national statistics. The proportion of young people who suffer hidden exclusion is thought to be much greater than official figures suggest but the question of balance in the study was problematic; complicated, as described earlier, by issues of possible under- and over-representation by certain groups. There was seen to be no simple solution to this dilemma. Finally, a decision was made to seek, as far as possible, equal numbers of young men and young women in the study, and to raise the question of ethnic origin with the contact member of staff in each school. It was hoped that combined with documentary analysis of internal school records, the personal accounts from young people involved in the research would begin to map a clearer picture of differing pupil experience.



Two main methods of data collection were adopted in this study; focus groups and individual interviews. The decision to focus on these two approaches was based on their ability to provide a broad range of views and experiences, in direct contact with young people. It was planned that interviews would be carried out with young people who had some direct experience of some kind of exclusion, using the framework of 'layers of exclusion' to suggest the kinds of ways in which young people might be identified. The focus groups were seen as a way of meeting with a larger number of young people in schools, who might or might not include pupils with more direct experience of exclusion, but who comprise overall what might be described as a generality or typical pupil group. These two sets of meetings would focus on the same major themes associated with issues of exclusion, disruption and non-attendance, and attempt to place these in the context of central experiences in the school lives of these young people. In this way, it was hoped that to explore the differences and similarities, the unique instances and also any regularities or patterns of experience.

## Interviews

The decision to use a focussed, semi-structured interview approach was based on a number of reasons. It was felt to offer the necessary framework for talk with young people at a stage in their lives where, in our culture, their communications with adults are perhaps most problematic. It also acknowledged that some young people lack the practice and experience of articulating at length on any topic, and particularly their feelings and personal experience and it was felt that some structure would assist this. The decision was also based on the value of a semi-structured interview as an approximate to conversation, its tried and tested flexibility to unpack ambiguity, to dig deep, its freedom to pause and explore as topics of interest arise (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). However, interviewing is not without its critics and Yin describes what he sees as a weakness in the interview method when he talks of the danger of 'reflexivity – interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear' (1994;80). This implies that there is a possible interview situation where the interviewee speaks the 'truth'. However, this research asserts the importance of valuing what participants have to say and accepting

that they offer their views as 'honest', but it also asserts the importance of recognising that there is no unbiased, objective way of collecting information, but, rather, that all knowledge is situated and created in human interaction (Cicourel 1964). There is no escape from the essential personal and social interactions - of which data gathering is one. This view also forms the basis for my decision to talk of research *participants*, rather than 'interviewees' or 'respondents' in this thesis but also this leads Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), after Laing (1967), to suggest that it may be useful to think about research as working with 'capta' (what is taken) rather than 'data' (what is given). The choice of a semi-structured approach to interviewing seemed to offer the most appropriate way of engaging with the young people. A structured interview schedule would not have allowed the necessary flexibility in exploration of the characteristics of different kinds of exclusion nor of the boundaries of definitions. It was intended to give space for both etic and emic themes (Stake 1995;20) to be considered and in this way perhaps counter some of the criticism made by Oakley (1981) of interviewing as a 'masculine paradigm'. Within this approach it was planned to begin with questions asking for factual answers, for example, name, age, stage, previous schools attended, and then to move on to other aspects of school life in general; general school experience, likes and dislikes, and then to focus in on the issues of disruption and exclusion in particular before broadening out again to ask about life beyond school, pastimes and activities, and plans for the future.

The young people themselves were all aged between 13 and 15 years old; at an age and stage when the risks of official Exclusion and unauthorised non-attendance are known to be at their highest (Scottish Executive 2003, 2002). In other ways, there were difficult questions about seeking balance in the group of young people selected for interview. Part of the aim of the research is to give voice to those whose voice has been denied but, as noted earlier, one of the difficulties is that it is not yet clear whose voices are missing. The framework of 'layers of exclusion' seeks one way into this necessary exploration but representativeness is a questionable aim when accurate data on which to base this is often missing or incomplete. Seeking a balance of male and female participants, for example, is not straightforward because of the low rate of official female Exclusion for

indiscipline. Drawing a representative sample only from a list of Excluees and, say, young people referred to the inter-agency support group meetings chaired by schools (Pupil Support Groups) would have led to contact primarily with white, male, disruptive pupils; and this would only reveal one part of what is thought to be a much larger, more complex picture. Furthermore, it would offer no equivalent guidance on how best to select a balance of young people at risk of broader social exclusion. It is difficult to gauge, then, how to achieve, an 'appropriate' balance. The identification of young people to be approached for interview was based finally, not on a notion of representativeness as reflected in official statistics, but on the need to recognise that sex, gender, ethnic and cultural background were all important factors.

### *Interview Instrumentation*

The questions which formed the basis for the semi-structured interview (see appendix) were based on Munn, Johnstone and Chalmers' (1992a, 1992b) and Johnstone and Munn's (1997) large surveys of teachers' views on indiscipline, but there was also a number of other valuable sources. Stirling's investigation into hidden exclusion (1992), Osler's (2000) and Pomeroy's (2000) approaches to information gathering from pupils with experience of official Exclusion were also found useful. A concern to explore, rather than assume, the place of exclusion within the school and wider experience of these young people, led to reference to Bogdan and Biklen (1982) in general and Gow and McPherson (1980) more specifically for assistance in framing some of the more contextual questions which asked about social relationships and structures and attitudes to work, academic success and other achievements. While not a life history interview as such, such questions attempted to capture in the round the 'lived worlds' of the research participants.

### **Focus Groups**

The use of focus groups has become very much more popular in qualitative research in recent years, usually taking the form of a group meeting or series of meetings which allow participants to discuss, reflect and voice concerns about an issue of particular

interest to the group members. It was felt that this approach would offer a relevant and hopefully enjoyable experience for the young people involved. For the purposes of this research it is important to distinguish between a group interview and a focus group. Kitzinger highlights the value of the focus group *per se* in terms of 'the explicit use of the group interaction as research data' (1994;103). There is an interest not only in the content of the individual or group views as there would be in a group interview, but also in how the group members debate, support and challenge these views in the course of their meeting. This analysis of process as well as outcomes is what makes the focus group such a useful tool. Armstrong, Hill and Secker describe a common use of focus groups almost as springboards for individual interviews and report that in their research, 'While group discussions provided an opportunity both to explore a breadth of views and enable participants to comment on and develop each other's ideas, the individual interviews allowed the researchers to explore more personal experiences and attitudes in greater privacy' (2000;62). While recognising this as a valid use of focus group, there is a different emphasis in this study. In the awareness that many of the reasons underlying exclusion seem to be associated with difficulties in peer relations, the focus group seemed to offer a verisimilitude, a valuable insight into peer relations in each school setting. As Morgan suggests, 'focus groups are useful when it comes to investigating *what* participants think, but they excel at uncovering *why* participants think as they do' (1997;25 original emphasis).

Another common feature of focus groups is the use of pre-formed groups, where participants are known to each other and where there is easy reference to a shared history or 'collective remembering' (Kitzinger 1994;105), allowing the research to gain a sense of the meaning of comments in context. At the same time, it is important to recognise the danger in this; that this same shared history means that each participant has an identity within the group, sometimes a reputation to be upheld. They all know each other, but they may not trust each other. It is likely that those known to be most vocal elsewhere will be most vocal in the group, and those who usually offer least verbally, will also do as expected. It may be argued, then, that a group is not the best setting in which to collect information on a sensitive issue. However, Borland *et al.* (2001) point out that, that



despite these reservations, it is an approach popular with young people, that young people often seem more comfortable talking in this environment, and that it offers a relatively informal and light-hearted way to engage with young people.

With a view to minimising the possible disadvantages, however, the pre-formed groups were drawn from Social Education (SE) classes, taking advantage of the particular purpose and climate of this area of the curriculum. These classes are often led by guidance teachers, who have a specific responsibility for pupil welfare and pastoral support. The syllabus is relatively informal; with less assessment than elsewhere in secondary schools. All students take SE and there is no setting by ability. The most common mode of communication is talk rather than writing and the topics aim to encourage informed decision-making on a range of personal and social issues. There is often explicit discussion of the importance of group rules, of confidentiality and of trust and the focus groups, then, sought to build all of this. It was also useful that SE classes are usually smaller than groups for, say, English or Maths, bringing the numbers closer to the optimum focus group size suggested by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), Oates (2000) and Punch (2002). It allowed an approximately equal number of young women and men to be involved and from the age range 13-15 years old, similar to the interview participants. It also allowed the inclusion of young people with a range of experiences, including those with more direct experience of disruptive behaviour or exclusion.

This choice of locus, then, was one intended to allow for ideas, feelings and experiences to be discussed informally and in such a way that insight may be gained into young people's own framework of understanding. It allowed for some grounded theory to emerge and to be considered alongside the notion outlined earlier of the framework of 'layers of exclusion' outlined earlier. It allowed for the language of these experiences to be heard, and for this, too, to contribute to the new framework of meanings of exclusion.

### *Focus Group Instrumentation*

In each of the four schools where individual interviews took place, a focus group was formed and three main methods of data collection were devised for use with the focus

groups (see appendix). These were known as Disruption Cards, Concentric Conversations and a Behaviour Questionnaire. Disruption Cards was based on a popular groupwork exercise (Brandes and Norris 1998) and aimed to collect group views on many different aspects of disruption in school; attitudes of group members to peer behaviour, the management of disruption by school management and understanding of the process, aims and effectiveness of official Exclusion process. This was a whole group, 'round-table' discussion with no writing required at any stage. Concentric Conversations (Brandes and Norris 1998, Phtiaka 1997) took up many of the same themes but asked the participants to discuss a series of questions, working in pairs which changed with each with new question. The pairs were to be asked to make brief notes on yellow 'post-its' and to stick these up on appropriately labelled A1-size posters which were hung up around the classroom. Neither of these instruments ascribed a name to any response. The start of the second session was to be used to feed back the information gathered to the group and time allowed for further comment or reflection on that feedback. The final instrument was a Behaviour Questionnaire (Johnstone and Munn 1997) to be completed by all. This differed from the other two instruments in that it was to be completed individually and asked for the name of the participant and their gender, so that some analysis could be carried out on this basis. Using a tick-box format, the questionnaire asked the young people to detail their own involvement, if any, in disruptive behaviour or unauthorised non-attendance and then to comment on the effects of these same behaviours by their peers.

### Other Sources of Data

As well as collecting data directly from young people in individual interview and focus group, a large body of other information was gathered throughout the fieldwork. Some time was spent on observation in each school in order to familiarise the researcher with the physical environment described in interview and focus groups, and to gain a general sense of each school's ethos and approaches. Interviews with school staff and professionals in other agencies were carried out, which added to a contextualised understanding of the attitudes and experiences of the young people.

There was a very wide range of official written material available to the research, including school prospectus' and development plans, and departmental development plans and reviews. There was also local authority documentation on official Exclusion, truancy and targets for reduction in Exclusion rates. Schools' Exclusion and attendance rates were noted. Information about each school's take-up of Free Meal Entitlement was also noted as the most useful, albeit flawed, measure of relative poverty. The overall educational attainment levels were noted for each school. Most of the information at this level was readily available.

However, there was other documentary analysis which, proved much more difficult to obtain. I was interested in gathering any information which would give insight into hidden and unofficial forms of exclusion as there still so many aspects of this issue under-researched. It would have been very useful, for example, to have gained some overall notion of the number of pupils in these schools referred to the Pupil Support Groups (PSGs), or with part-time or individualised timetables, or the number of young people in each school who attend a support base and with what aim and for what period of time, or the names of those young people most frequently sent out of class for disruptive behaviour, or those pupils who have attendance difficulties, or who have social work support, or who are referred for inter-agency support. Such information was often gathered by schools and the professionals working with them, but in a much more *ad hoc* fashion than for the statistics required by local authority or the Scottish Executive. This, unfortunately, made it difficult to make any valid comparisons. Responsibilities and priorities varied from school to school, and with so many demands on their time, the systems were not always transparent. Schools often seemed to have devised their own ways of using pupil monitoring systems, for example, and while some staff seemed adept at working out how to extract a list of all new entrants who had joined the school after the start of S1, not all seemed to have a full understanding of what their own computerised systems could provide. The frustration of attempting to gather information on these issues paralleled the framework of 'layers of exclusion' in terms of the idea of more and less visibility/accountability, and the suggestion that beneath the highly visible official

Exclusion process there are other experiences, cloaked in an obscurity which precludes a valid exploration of possible patterns of experience within and across schools.

More difficult still was the collation of any data about the numbers of young people whose learning and/or social relationships are perceived to be affected by the disruptive behaviour of others. The Pupil Personal Records (PPRs) held for each pupil are governed by the Data Protection Act (1998) and cannot, therefore, identify another pupil by name. The PPRs to which I had access included many more records of those seen as disruptive rather than those disrupted, as, for example, the record might note that action was taken against a pupil in connection with a bullying incident, but not who was bullied or whether this was the same person bullied in any previous incident. The difficulty of gathering such information and Cohen, Manion and Morrison's warning that written material may be 'selective, lack objectivity, be of unknown validity and may possibly be deceptive' (2000;147) provided a further argument for approaching young people directly to seek their views on these issues. The textual analysis, then, of documents and records was of some, though limited value.

## **Summary**

The design seeks a conscious marrying of theory and method. It aims to be research as praxis (Lather 1986). It is informed by a belief in the need to explore more than the trauma, deviance or vulnerability of young people in school. While not denying the importance of these elements, it also has an expressed interest in the whole of these young people's school lives in order to fully recognise the importance of context both for them as research participants and for the findings of the research itself. Furthermore, it looks for successes as well as difficulties in these young research participants lives, in order that they see the research as an opportunity for reflection which is a positive and affirming process.



Its design also utilises the development of critical thinking about concepts of power, discipline and gender in relation to understandings of disruption and exclusion in school. It adopted mixed methods; broadly qualitative but with some quantitative analysis where this was appropriate. In schools where regimes of power are contested daily at many different levels, both openly and more covertly, it was recognised that the design of the research would be filtered by pupils and staff in terms of stance on the power of young people to represent themselves, to construct their arguments, to reflect with care. The study's recognition of the need to make the data collection as dynamic and interactive as possible, to make it meaningful for those participating, was seen as one of the most important ways of signalling to the research participants that their views were valuable and that their experiences were seen as valid contributions to the body of knowledge about exclusion. So too, the study's concern to explore in more depth the situation of young women was both a recognition of, and a challenge to their continuing invisibility and under-representation.

It seemed then that voiced research and direct contact with young people as pupils in schools offered the most appropriate approach. It values experience as a valid contribution to the body of knowledge about exclusion and that seemed particularly pertinent in view of the identified gaps in the literature. It has the capacity to value young people's experience as much as that of adults, and again, this was seen as essential to redress a balance in literature. It can also readily take account of, and place equal value on, data from a disparate group of young people, whatever their status in schools. Finally, but importantly, it fitted with the emancipatory aim of the study.

I have set out the rationale for methods adopted in this study; the reasons for choosing to approach the research questions in these particular ways, and the need for prioritisation of the voices of young people as the main sources of new knowledge. I recognise that any choice about methods and design is a balance of advantages and disadvantages and that there is no one best way to gather data. I return to Laing's (1967) suggestion that any information gathered in research should be regarded as 'capta' rather than 'data' and

intend that this act as a caution, an additional lens through which to view the fieldwork, as I turn now to discussion of the main findings of the study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Findings: The Process of Seeking Access and Consent with the Study Schools

#### Introduction

As the detail of the research design was being finalised, contact was made with the local authority to discuss arrangements for the fieldwork, and to consider the most appropriate schools for inclusion in the study. It was assumed at this stage that support from the local authority would ensure ease of access, and while any design may expect to be part of the iterative process, no particular problems were anticipated.

However, in the months following, initial contact with the schools was to prove much more complex, frustrating and protracted than foreseen initially. The different positioning by schools, the intricacy of negotiations and the nuance of interaction all converged to suggest that this part of the research would benefit from much closer examination. The process of seeking access to the schools for study, and ensuring the active, informed consent of young people in those schools, gradually came to be understood as important data in its own right; integral to the interpretation of the findings as a whole. As Harden *et al.* note, presciently, ‘“informed consent” is problematic not primarily because of children’s lack of understanding of research, but because their participation in any research project is dependent on adult gate-keepers’ (2000;7).

There follows a discussion of the ways in which schools and young people came to be involved in the study and the pressures and influences surrounding their involvement. This helps to frame the context for discussion of the findings from both the individual interviews with excluded pupils and the focus groups with a generality of pupils.

## Selection of Schools

The four schools were all mainstream secondary schools in one urban Scottish local authority, selected on the basis of intrinsic interest (Stake 1995), but also with some concern for representativeness (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, Silverman 2000). All four schools were also chosen on the basis that they were acknowledged as having good, though different, practice with regard to Exclusion. It was hoped that this would allow the research to make best use of the existing good experiences and practice in the city. In a city which has a relatively low rate of official Exclusion (Scottish Executive 2003), these schools are representative of low and high Excluding schools as can be seen in Table 3.1 below. The high Excluding schools are shown as shaded. They share some similarities, but are still sufficiently different from each other in character for some interesting comparisons and insights to emerge. As previously noted, the design included a pairing of the four schools, described now in detail.

Table 3.1 School Exclusions 2001/2002

School	School roll	Number of Excludees		Percentage Unauthorised Absence	Number of Pupils with FME	Number of Referrals to Pupil Support Group
		M	F			
School 1	1094	12	7	3	51	49
School 2	899	5	0	2	44	Not known
School 3	439	28	6	6	115	81
School 4	512	13	12	8	210	53

*All figures refer to pupils in S1-S4*

*FME = Free Meals Entitlement*

*\*Unauthorised absence includes temporary exclusion and truancy as well as unexplained absence*

The first pairing was of two schools which shared much in common. Schools 1 and 2 are known across the city as popular schools, with well-established academic reputations and a demographically older, stable staff group. Places in these schools are highly sought-after and they both receive a number of placing requests each year. They are large schools with low Exclusion rates, low absence rates and low FME. Built in the 1960s, School 1 lies in a prosperous part of the city, surrounded by well-maintained tenement



homes, with good transport links and close to good public and sporting facilities. It has the kudos of being known as a 'cricket' school and one which has produced some athletes of national standing. Alongside a more modern 'Welcome' sign, is the school shield with its Latin motto. Unusually, the school does not lie in its own catchment but within the catchment of another very popular school. Most of its pupils are drawn from middle-class homes in a number of different neighbourhoods, but a high profile minority come from a much poorer area of town, some distance away.

School 2 is a community school, but set on the eastern outskirts of the city. The local area retains its feeling of having been an old, rural village with its own distinct character. Demographically, it is dominated by an older, retired population which leads to some tension with local youth and concerns about their behaviour. Although lying very close to School 4, the local young people rarely make use of each others' facilities due to longstanding territorial rivalry. The school was built in the 1950s but has fared much better than School 4, of similar age. It is well maintained and, following extensive refurbishment, has bright, well-resourced classrooms and very attractive grounds including extensive garden areas and playing fields.

The second pairing was of two schools, 3 and 4, which have high Exclusion and non-attendance rates, higher entitlement to free school meals, and low academic attainment levels compared with national and local levels. One lies close to the city centre and the other on a large housing estate by the docks.

School 3 lies on the very edge of the city of Edinburgh, some distance from good public transport links, and with a sharp divide in the housing mix. To the west lie the Georgian homes of professionals whose children often attend elite private schools, while to the south are the traditional working class homes of one of the oldest parts of town. It is from these poorer areas that most of the pupils are drawn. The school lies close to the local mosque and also the city's prison. The school itself is housed in an early twentieth century stone building, drab from the outside, and originally a four-year secondary school. Funds have recently been made available for the complete refurbishment of the

school and work is underway. The roll is around 440, one of the lowest in Edinburgh. The school has an ethnically diverse population, and a relatively high rate of non-attendance and a low rate of academic attainment. It is also known as a 'caring' school which works flexibly with vulnerable young people.

Schools 4 is has recently been refurbished as a community school with new public swimming pool, cafes and crèche. The school serves almost exclusively a large, poorly designed public housing estate with high rates of unemployment and relative poverty. The school and the community have worked hard to establish a positive identity in the face of considerable difficulties. Academic results are among the lowest nationally and locally, although the school has a strong music department and a number of successful school bands.

Although each has its own identity, these two schools are similar in the sense that they both have relatively high rates of official Exclusion, non-attendance and Free Meal Entitlement (FME). They have lower than average levels of overall academic attainment. They share an uneven local reputation and lose a number of pupils through placing requests to other local authority schools and to some of the city's private schools.

The schools were selected in discussion with the local authority liaison for the studentship and no difficulties associated with access were anticipated at this stage. In retrospect, a number of features of the research were perhaps seen as conducive to ease of access. Firstly, the studentship was funded through a budget with which school senior management, guidance and learning support staff would be familiar. This was a budget which focussed on support for Alternatives to Exclusion from School (ALTEX) at a time when this was seen as a laudable concern of policy. The city had, in line with national policy, outlined to each school a specific individualised target reduction in numbers of incidents of Exclusion for the academic session. Therefore the reasons for the research had a tangible 'currency' and locus. Secondly, this research was to be conducted by a teacher, aware of and sympathetic to the competing pressures of daily school life. It was assumed that this would help to reassure school staff and allay any fears or

misunderstandings that might arise. In the first study school, School 3, where I was well known and the approach for involvement had been made by myself, all went well, giving no hint of the difficulties to come. However, over the period of the next four to five months, in which I had hoped to undertake a large part of the fieldwork, it became clear from other schools that there was a significant resistance to involvement and perhaps suspicion about the aims of the research.

The local authority was slow to contact schools during this time and it was several months before one school was approached via the local authority liaison contact and agreed initially to be involved in the study. During my one meeting in the school there were indications that this would have been a very interesting school in which to meet with young people. I was told that there was a pupil support base which received referrals for a wide number of reasons associated with behaviour and attendance, but it seemed to have no effective gatekeeper. During this visit to the school I encountered a female pupil, who, I was told, was typical of a number of young people who were at risk of Exclusion in the school. I was also told in the course of this conversation, paradoxically, that the Pupil Support Group (PSG) was unlikely to produce an agenda for the next meeting due to the lack of pupils with problems. Following that meeting I received a phone call to say that the school did not wish to be involved in the research, citing its very low Exclusion rate as the reason. Assurances and further explanation of the aim of the study were offered but it was made clear that it would be counter-productive to attempt further discussion. Furthermore it was stated that the school did not feel bound by the request from the authority to assist in this research.

Although this was a setback, the experience with this school was beneficial in the sense that it focussed attention on the process of negotiations with schools themselves as gatekeepers. Previously, much more time had been spent in consideration of the need to negotiate the active consent of young people in the study. In discussion with the authority's representative it became clear that nothing would be gained by forcing the school to participate in the study. However, this did lead to a reappraisal of the information given to schools, the letters to young people and to their parents/carers.

Separate information booklets for young people and school staff were developed, based on those used by Lloyd, Stead and Kendrick (2001). These were then sent to each prospective school with an explanatory letter, to allow staff to see in advance the kinds of questions to be asked and approaches planned. This experience also raised questions about the variability of relationships between schools and the authority and the use of the authority's representative as intermediary in the negotiations for involvement in the research.

After discussion with the Education Department about the length of time taken to approach schools and the problems encountered with initial access, it was agreed that I would approach schools directly. Three schools were then contacted informally and asked if they would be open to a more formal request for involvement in the study. It was made clear that schools had been identified on the basis of their good practice but assurances were also given about confidentiality and anonymity. It was hoped that these revised preparations and precautions would ensure that schools felt fully informed and comfortable with the research. However, there was also an awareness that any school's decision about involvement was dependent also on the quality of the relationship with the local authority.

### **Negotiating Access and Consent with Schools**

In School 3, where the fieldwork had gone smoothly, the management had been welcoming and as helpful as their frenetic schedules permitted, but now the first significant differences between schools began to emerge. In general, the high Excluding schools in the study, Schools 3 and 4, were found to be much more open in their contact with the research and this may have been for a number of reasons. I was known in these schools, having worked as a guidance teacher in one and having previously worked with the head teacher in the other. This reinforced an awareness of the importance of trust in sensitive areas of research and a growing recognition of the importance of the researcher *per se*; 'Whether or not people have knowledge of social research, they are often more



concerned with what kind of person the researcher is, than with the research itself. They will try to gauge how far he or she is to be trusted' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983;78). There was a sense that, politically, I was assumed to be 'on side', having worked in a high Excluding school myself. Knowing that the authority was funding the research, these schools may also have been willing to share information about any social, emotional and behavioural difficulties of their pupils in the hope that it would provide a balance to the stark statistics of their low standing in the nationally published examination results 'league tables'.

Both of the low Excluding schools continued to be much more cautious. In School 1 the head teacher agreed initially, but a short time later, after internal discussions the DHT contacted the education department outlining a series of reservations as follows,

'Sensitivity about approaching vulnerable families and children  
Access to confidential information  
Workload issues given the number of similar requests we receive each month'.

After discussion with the Education Department and a meeting involving myself, senior school staff and the authority's contact for the studentship (a senior education department official) the school agreed to be involved. However, there did appear to be continuing tensions both within the school hierarchy and between school and the local authority. Relations between school and authority seemed to echo negotiations with the school which had refused involvement and its denial of the right of the education authority to govern its decisions. My concern in this study is often with understanding the complex power relations between pupils, and between pupils and teachers. Although not a direct focus of the study, these negotiations highlighted the complexities and tensions in adult-adult relationships, which might impinge significantly on relations with young people and ultimately on the experiences of these young people. The lack of co-operation, the subtleties of resistance in this particular school to the research also mirrored in many ways the subversive, low-level disruption and manipulation of 'small powers' which I was to find so often in the experience of young people in school.

The other low Excluding school, School 2, agreed much more readily to involvement after a request via the university, but withheld all access to pupil personal records (PPRs) despite assurances about confidentiality and anonymity. The head teacher explained,

‘I would prefer if you obtained the consent of the parent to peruse the file rather than the pupil.... It may be, for example, that the parent has provided us with confidential information that they do not want their child to know’.

A request to observe the inter-agency Pupil Support Group meeting in this school was only eventually agreed after some months, though I had been clear that I was keenly aware of the need for confidentiality and the school knew that in my previous work I had regularly participated in this meeting in a number of schools for more than ten years. Experiences in both of these schools perhaps illustrate some of the tension felt about open access and confidentiality for schools in general, but underlying this there were also emergent questions about the particular kinds of barriers erected, however implicitly, against the aims of the research itself.

One ‘barrier’ and an understandable one, raised by all schools was the large number of requests they receive for assistance with research. However, in Schools 1 and 2 there was a consistency about their other reservations which seemed intriguing. In neither of these schools was I known personally, though my previous position in a school hierarchy was known, that is as Principal Teacher of Guidance reporting to senior management. As Hitchcock and Hughes point out, ‘research projects have met problems when their aims and methods of data collection have conflicted with a superior’s area of jurisdiction and responsibility’ (1995;41). Both the ‘aims’ (to understand the experience of exclusion from school), and the ‘methods’ (speaking to young people about their experiences), may have been seen as an intrusion on the ‘area of jurisdiction’ of senior management, and, significantly, in an area where they were also under considerable external local and national pressure. Schools 1 and 2 were also low Excluding, high-status schools. In contrast with the high Excluding schools, they may have felt that research on ‘Exclusion from School’ did little to further the aims of the school, and might indeed harm a closely-guarded reputation.

At a different level, they were highly sensitive to the threat in the research to the privacy of pupils, the danger of further stigmatisation of vulnerable young people and, in particular, the probability of problems with consent from parents. In conversation, teachers in these schools often made reference to an ever-present pressure from articulate and forceful middle-class parents. Taken together, these were powerful and effective arguments, often invoking the need to protect the dignity of vulnerable young people, and I made it clear that I shared these concerns. But these were also malleable arguments. There has been much research exploring the ways in which children and young people are seen as both 'vulnerable' and incompetent' (James and Prout 1997, Mayall 1994, Morrow and Richards 1996,) in our society. Scott *et al.* (1998) talk about children in Western cultures being conceived of as a 'protected species' while Griffin draws attention to the teenage years as 'the focus of adult fears and pity' (1993). The arguments used by gatekeepers in Schools 1 and 2 sought to protect pupils but also afforded protection from scrutiny for school staff and internal school processes designed to support those vulnerable young people. These arguments also provided protection from the threat of possible challenge by forceful, articulate parents and, at the end of the research period, from the education authority once the research was in the public domain. As Qvortrup notes,

'Protection is mostly accompanied by exclusion in one way or another: protection may be suggested even when it is not strictly necessary for the sake of the children, but rather to protect the adult social orders against disturbances from the presence of children. This is exactly the point at which protection threatens to slide into unwarranted dominance'  
(1997;87)

Qvortrup's reference to the 'presence of children' seems particularly useful here, interpreted in two main senses. Firstly 'presence' may be understood to mean immediate, physical presence; with the notion that the research was, unusually in the context of education, interested in exploring young people's experience in direct conversation with them. Secondly, 'presence' conveys a sense of an acknowledgement of the power and influence of young people in general, and within that, a positive regard and respect for

young people's contribution to a wider understanding of exclusion. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995;41), referring to Holly's (1984) discussion of issues in action research, usefully note that 'there may, in fact, be an in-built opposition between democratically conceived research and hierarchically structured schools'.

This sense of opposition seemed to be at the crux of some of the difficulties in seeking access to schools. The study design included a plan for focussed, individual, confidential interviews with pupils who might have some highly critical comments to make about the school, its teachers and support systems. Not only might this be construed as 'democratic' in Holly's words, it would, in Foucault's terms, challenge, 'who was empowered to speak seriously' (Rouse 1994;93). The guidance letter to school and the information booklets all made clear that these meetings with young people were to be taken as 'serious' and that the content of these discussions intended to make valid contributions to knowledge; in a context which historically has not valued young people in this way. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on seeking the active consent of research participants, implying support for the notion that young people were entitled to make choices about participation. The notion of choice may be considered challenging by those who argue that overly-prescribed schools in the UK have little space for choice or the development of self-efficacy either for young people or the adults working with them. By valuing the 'presence of children', then, the research may be seen to challenge the ways in which schools operate, questioning their hierarchical structure.

The 'presence of children' was also a feature of initial discussions in Schools 3 and 4. They were also sensitive to the need for confidentiality for their pupils, and one requested the inclusion of an additional explanatory letter home to young people in the focus group. Concern about parental questioning of the need for the research was not, however, a major part of any discussion with the low Excluding schools and indeed emerged as a distinctive marker of the different sensitivities in home/school relations in the high and low Excluding schools.



It seemed that these sensitivities were distinctly different across the pairs of schools but also multi-layered within each school. Lee (1993) suggests that sensitivity may permeate every stage of the research process, and also asks for a reconsideration of the commonly assumed meaning of the term 'sensitive'. For him, sensitive research is 'research which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it' (1993;4) and he suggests that this threat can arise in different ways. In preparation for the fieldwork, I had been conscious of the sensitivity of the topic as potentially threatening to the young people as participants. Much thought had been given as to how to plan for this, for example, in devising a design which encouraged a process of active, informed consent with pupils. Much thought had also been given to the sensitivity of research which involved speaking with young people at a time in their lives when they are so keenly questioning, seeking and asserting their own personal and social identities. However, there was now an awareness of the sensitivities of the schools as gatekeepers. There was now a recognition that, as an experienced teacher who had worked in a high Excluding school, as a new academic researcher but one funded by the employing authority, my position was understood by some at least as ambivalent, perhaps as the threat of 'an outsider who was an insider'. Silverman exhorts the researcher to be 'non-judgemental' (2000;199) though also recognises the inherent difficulties with this. It seemed that one of the issues associated with being 'an outsider who was also an insider' was that for some school staff, the researcher was perhaps perceived to be sitting in judgement on their practice. Ironically, the barriers and subtle resistances only served to draw attention to the sensitivities, the sensitisation, perhaps, of school staff to scrutiny. In a reconsideration then of the meaning of 'sensitive research' it was now possible to distinguish the sensitivity of the topic, the sensitivity of young people and, significantly, the sensitivity of the schools as gatekeepers, to both the aims of the research and to the researcher.

## Identifying Potential Research Participants in Schools

Once fieldwork began in these schools, then, it was not surprising that many strands of these initial discussions with schools continued to weave their way through aspects of contact with staff and the process of identifying potential pupils to approach. All schools were approached with the same request to identify, firstly, a mixed set of young people for inclusion in focus groups and, secondly, potential participants for individual interviews on the following basis; one young person who had been Excluded temporarily at some time in their secondary school career; one who was felt to be at risk of Exclusion due to behaviour, and a further two who were felt to be excluded or marginalised in a broader sense, for example, through non-attendance. Table 3.2 below outlines the range of interviews eventually undertaken. In all, 17 interviews with young people were carried out across the four schools.

*Table 3.2 Summary: Interviews in all schools*

*Total = 17*

	School 1 N= 3	School 2 N=4	School 3 N= 4	School 4 N= 6
Officially Excluded for indiscipline	2	1	1	4
At risk of official Exclusion for indiscipline	0	1	1	1
Excluded in a broader sense	1	2	2	1

All four schools found it easiest to identify young people who had been Excluded for overtly challenging behaviour. From conversations with staff, this seemed to be because there are unambiguous and generally accepted criteria for the category of 'Excluee'. As a group these young people tend to have a high profile, generating a large amount of paperwork, and requiring a disproportionate amount of professional time overall. Staff were usually able to name a number of potential research participants in this category, and from there work out which they might suggest approaching. At this stage there seemed to be a number of different filtering processes in operation. Some of the filtering may be attributed to expediency; which pupils were more readily available or known to

the contact in school. However, teachers would also say, for example, 'I need to find you someone who'll actually talk to you' or, 'There's no point in giving you Class 4H...', making informal judgements about who would or would not be willing or able to meet to talk, either as a group or individually. The classes selected as a basis for the focus groups were usually one of the school contact's own social education classes and this seemed to be a fairly straightforward identification process. The identification of potential interview participants was more time-consuming. As they discussed possible options, staff working in the high Excluding schools often seemed to be able to draw on a more highly developed vocabulary for talking about pupils' personal and social issues.

At a different level, however, it seemed that in all of the schools, there operated an implicit rule that none of the individual interviews would be with young people who might be seen as extreme. Within each category the young people identified, particularly for individual interview, were all found to be relatively stable or stereotypical; for example, the individual interviewees first suggested were usually young men rather than young women; none had any apparent physical difficulties and only one was from a minority ethnic background. Interestingly, too, the potential interviewees who had experience of official Exclusion appeared to have had a more settled school career than might be expected from the literature.

There was some keen discussion and support among teachers for the research focus on young people who were seen as marginalised in and around school rather than openly disruptive. Teachers would often voice a concern that they felt they were not able to meet the needs of the 'quiet ones' because of all the other demands on their time. When they understood that I was keen to meet with young people who might have attendance issues they would name with ease, and without reference to any file or record, a number of pupils in this category. There was however, a further filtering process as they considered which might be approached without giving upset or causing alarm, either to parent or child. The support for this aspect of the study resonated with the concerns outlined in the framework of 'layers of exclusion'. Recalling Fraser's discussion of the separation of different groups of vulnerable pupils on the basis of 'needs talk' (1989;

161), it was interesting that it was the ‘quiet ones’ who were also described most often as ‘needy’.

Most surprising, however, was the difficulty which all the schools had in identifying for interview young people at risk of official Exclusion for indiscipline. I explained that I was interested in what might characterise these young people, to find out how they avoided Exclusion when others did not and how they saw themselves in relation to their peers. This explanation seemed to be accepted but in each school, difficulties then arose, as the following examples reveal. In School 1, which continued to seem most resistant to the research, the process of identification took several months despite requests made to three separate senior staff members. One young person who had been identified by staff as disengaged but not disruptive described herself in interview as at risk of Exclusion, saying she was ‘about to be chucked out’ for her poor behaviour. In School 2, the interviewee explained that he had ‘never been Excluded, just suspended’, raising the question of hidden, internal exclusion explored earlier. In School 3 the Assistant Head Teacher (AHT) Guidance wrote a short memo to the guidance team, looking for suggestions for interviewees in this category, saying, ‘I’m really toiling - any ideas?’ In School 4, the one pupil who was identified, and with whom I met, had in fact been officially Excluded in the previous academic session.

In terms of the study design, these events led to a redefining of the original category of ‘at risk of Exclusion’ to include those who might have been Excluded previously, and who were therefore, ‘at risk of further Exclusion’. However, this was not seen as wholly satisfactory, leaving unanswered the question of why all these schools were able to identify so few young people in this situation and yet identify other potentially excluded pupils with such alacrity. Whereas sometimes in this process it seemed that differences between schools related to whether it was a high Excluding/low status school or not, these examples suggest an broader underlying issue. In line with city policy, all these schools operate a system of PSGs; regular, structured, inter-professional meetings which seek to prevent inappropriate Exclusion from school and to plan support for vulnerable



young people, including those at risk of Exclusion. In seeking to understand this finding, then, a number of possible explanations emerged.

It may be that it is easier to identify Excluees rather than those at risk of Exclusion because, as has been suggested earlier, Exclusion is still being used as a routine sanction rather than as a last resort in a staged series of responses to difficult or dangerous behaviour. This would suggest that the relationship between Excluee and those at risk, between prevention and crisis response is still highly problematic and requiring further investigation. Alternatively, it is possible that the framework of 'layers of exclusion' which provided the basis for the three broad categories of 'exclusion' is flawed.

However, it was never in dispute in conversation with school staff and with all the professionals who work in schools, that there is a group of pupils in each school who are at risk of Exclusion. Although it can only be speculation, it may be that teachers implicitly feared that identification of young people at risk of Exclusion, by involvement in the research, might precipitate an Exclusion. It might have been seen as 'tempting fate', though if this is the reason it raises a question about how these young people are understood in general in school and in the PSG; and it also raises a question about how vulnerable young people in the other categories are perceived in school.

On the other hand, it may be that the contact person within schools, usually a promoted teacher or senior manager with responsibility for Guidance, was not best placed in the school to identify young people at risk of Exclusion. Indeed, this suggestion was made by staff in one school. However, if this is true, it raises an urgent question about internal school support for vulnerable pupils and the effectiveness of communication systems between guidance, the discipline systems, and senior management. This may, in turn, be part of an explanation about internal school tension in the face of competing external pressures. For Wrigley (2003) this provides evidence that the process of Exclusion is symptomatic of the breakdown of workable relationships in the school system as an effect of reductionist educational change.

It is not possible to be certain which explanation or combination of explanations is most relevant but what does seem certain is that this finding raises an important issue about issues of understanding and support for some groups of vulnerable young people in school. That this difficulty of identification was a feature of all four schools, regardless of the relative rates of Exclusion, seems a significant finding in terms of possible influences on how schools define and understand Exclusion and, perhaps, how young people come to define themselves in relation to this.

This tension between sensitivity and perceived threat was also revealed by another contrast between the four schools which eventually became involved in the study. While the two high Excluding schools differed in the degree of priority with which they regarded the issues of consent, neither saw the obtaining of consent from pupils and parents as a particular barrier to the fieldwork. However, in both of the low Excluding schools, questions of access and consent continued to give rise to an ongoing debate between the researcher and the school. The form of this debate has provided the study with new insight into teacher and broader societal discourse about the vulnerability and incompetence of young people, and the need for their protection.

The issue of protection may also have featured in the differing reception given to the researcher's plan for individual interviews and focus groups, and the observation that overall, and across all schools, fewer issues of access and consent were raised about setting up the focus groups than individual interviews. This may have been because the focus groups comprised a majority of more settled pupils perceived to be less likely to criticise the school. If so, this may reinforce the notion that the individual interviews with excluded young people were seen as more threatening in some instances. It may also have been a reflection of the stated intention to ask young people about their experience of being disrupted; an aim which met with broad approval in all schools. Then again, it may have been associated with a perception of the comparative 'seriousness' of an individual meeting and a group meeting, allied to the ways in which these different meetings would usually be understood in school.

## Seeking Consent from Young People

This discussion about access and consent has so far explored the issues that arose in the initial stages of seeking the involvement of schools. From there, it has gone on to examine how these issues continued to shape contact with school staff as fieldwork began and as young people were identified, both individuals and focus groups. The final part of this discussion considers the various positions which schools adopted with regard to consent from the young people themselves, and asks whether these different positions may have had an impact on the findings overall.

Looking for consent from the young people for interviews and focus groups, the research design had, as described earlier, outlined a system of ‘opt-out’ consent for initial contact, with the intention of following this up with a gradual shift towards a more active, negotiated consent. This was explained to all the schools but again they responded in different ways, and to allow the research to proceed, individual arrangements were made as can be seen in Table 3.3.

*Table 3.3 Consent: all schools*

School	Focus Groups		Interviews	
	Opt-out	Opt-in	Opt-out	Opt-in
1	✓			✓
2		✓		✓
3	✓		✓	
4	✓			✓

In each school, in accordance with local authority policy, initial contact with the young person and home was made via the school. Letters prepared by me went out from the schools, with a covering letter and with a school frank on the envelope. In the focus groups, only one parent ‘opted-out’ although this led to an interesting encounter, discussed later. In School 1, the first contacts were made by phone through the Depute Head Teacher (DHT), who had expressed early reservations about the research. This posed an additional difficulty in this school, allowing the research to be seen to be so closely associated with the school discipline system. In the other schools, these contacts

were made by Guidance or Learning Support staff, although I stressed that I was available to speak with any parent or pupil who wished any further information.

Schools 1, 2 and 4 were unwilling to consider a notion of a gradual shift from opt-out to opt-in consent with the interview participants, citing as reasons the vulnerability of these young people, the need to protect them from further stigmatisation, with Schools 1 and 2 also noting again the issues of parental pressures on the school. In School 2, with the invaluable assistance and persistence of a helpful guidance team, a series of individual interviews with young people and two focus group sessions with a typical group of pupils were completed. It was unfortunate, then, that the school management in this school felt unable to provide access to PPRs, so that the relevant contextual information about these young people is extremely limited. However, in School 1, which attempted to exert most control over the process of seeking consent with the individual interviews, there were significant and continuing difficulties, and following preliminary phone calls and approximately 15 letters sent to home, only three interviews took place over a period of five months, and one of those was with a young man who told me during our meeting that his involvement in the research had been a condition of re-admission after an Exclusion.

## **Summary**

In summary, then, there were many striking and cumulatively significant features of the process of seeking access and consent in the early stages of fieldwork. In view of the difficulties described here it may be argued that other schools would more easily have been approached, and problems avoided. However, this would deny the importance of the questions raised by these schools' sensitivities and also, at a practical level, it was likely that, having been raised in the five schools initially approached, these issues would have also arisen elsewhere. These difficulties emerged as reminders, as amplifiers of the emerging strands of sensitivity in this research.



The selection of two high Excluding schools and two low Excluding schools as sites of study was intended to allow exploration of the extent to which pupil experience might vary in these different settings. When it emerged that the pair of high Excluding schools was much more open to the research than the two low Excluding schools, and that one high status, low Excluding school had openly refused to co-operate with the local authority's request for involvement in the study, some further consideration was clearly required. At face value, it might seem reasonable to assume that access would be more of an issue for a high Excluding school, simply because of the higher proportion of vulnerable pupils and the additional support and resources required to maintain them in mainstream school. In this situation, it would have seemed understandable if the demands of outside research were seen as more difficult to prioritise. However, as described above, this was not found to be the case.

Harden *et al.*'s (2000) warning about the role of gatekeepers, at first disregarded as perhaps relevant to other research but not to this study, came to be seen as entirely relevant. The complex networks of power both within school relationships and also between the local authority and schools were illuminated by the demands made by the research, and raised questions about how these differing relationships might impact differentially on the experiences of young people. Some of the calls to 'protect' young people were shown to be problematic and the meaning of 'sensitive research' emerged as multi-layered, so that Cohen, Manion and Morrison's assertion that 'Researchers will need to ensure not only that access is permitted, but is, in fact, practicable' (2000;98) comes to be seen as overly simplistic. Though at times frustrating for the researcher, these issues and negotiations offer a much more clearly defined sense of the context of experience for vulnerable and marginalized young people in these schools, and a more clearly defined sense of context for an understanding of the research findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Findings: The Experiences Of Excluded Young People In School**

#### **Introduction**

Despite all the complexity of negotiation, the reservations and setbacks, the interviews with young people themselves ultimately came to provide some of the most fruitful contributions to the research overall. The young people were courteous and reflective without exception, by turns intense, humorous and angry, but many also inspiringly hopeful. There follows a description of the main findings from these individual interviews and a discussion of the particularities and patterns which emerged, offering a unique set of insights into the perceptions and experiences of pupils perceived to be excluded in some sense.

#### **Research Questions for Excluded Pupils**

The over-arching research questions guiding these interviews asked:

1. How do young people who have been excluded from, or within, or around school experience this?
2. How do such young people understand their experience and contextualise it in relation to the rest of their school experience; systems of discipline, disruption, academic attainment and achievement, social and personal identity?

3. What do they understand of different kinds of exclusion, both their own and other young people's?

As discussed earlier, official Exclusion associated with indiscipline has been more widely explored and documented than other understandings of exclusion. The discussions here explore what we may be able to learn from those who are on the margins but, significantly, not beyond the margins; those, in Lloyd, Stead and Kendrick's terms, who are 'hanging on in there' (2001). The interviews with those temporarily Excluded for reasons of indiscipline are set alongside interviews with pupils whose disruptive behaviour places them at risk of such Exclusion and alongside those marginalised in other ways. These, in turn, are later discussed together with the findings from discussions with those pupils who do not usually have direct experience of exclusion; the generality of pupils. The value of these personal accounts is that they are, indeed, personal; that they offer an insight not otherwise available into these young people's lives, and into both the difficulties and successes of their relationships in and with their schools.

## **The Interview Process**

The details of the young people are noted in Table 4.1 below. The shaded areas indicate details of pupils in high Excluding schools. The original intention had been to meet with one Excluee, one pupil at risk of Exclusion, and two pupils excluded more broadly in each of the four study schools. However, the issues which arose in seeking access and consent altered the final balance within the group of interview participants. As can be seen, the total of 17, ten male and seven female, comprises nine Excluees, two young people at risk of Exclusion and five others excluded in this broader sense. All the interviews took place in school time and on school premises. The information booklet sent out with the initial letters suggested that the meeting could be held elsewhere, for example, at home, if that were more convenient but this option was not followed up by

any of the participants. To ease the process for the schools, all interviews were fitted into either a single or double school period, usually between 40 minutes to one hour, so that young people were not arriving back in class at a time which might disturb classmates settled at their work.

*Table 4.1 Interview participant details*

*Total = 17*

<b>Pupil</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>M/F</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>'Layer' of Exclusion</b>
A	1	M	14	S3	White UK	Layer 1
B	1	F	13	S3	White UK	Layer 3
C	1	M	14	S3	White UK	Layer 1
D	2	M	14	S3	White UK	Layer 3
E	2	F	14	S3	White UK	Layer 3
F	2	M	13	S2	White UK	Layer 2
G	2	M	15	S3	South Asian UK	Layer 1
H	3	M	14	S3	White UK	Layer 3
J	3	M	14	S3	White UK	Layer 1
K	3	F	15	S4	White UK	Layer 3
L	3	M	14	S3	White UK	Layer 2
M	4	M	13	S2	White UK	Layer 1
N	4	F	15	S4	White UK	Layer 3
P	4	F	14	S4	White UK	Layer 1
Q	4	F	15	S4	White UK	Layer 1
R	4	M	15	S4	White UK	Layer 1
S	4	F	14	S4	White UK	Layer 1

*Layer 1 = 9 pupils who have been officially, temporarily Excluded from school once or more in secondary school for reasons of indiscipline*

*Layer 2 = 2 pupils identified by school staff as being at risk of official Exclusion for indiscipline*

*Layer 3 = 6 pupils identified by school staff as being excluded in a broader sense, e.g. through non-attendance or social isolation*

*Shading indicates High Excluding Schools*

As well as making brief fieldnotes, fifteen of the interviews were taped with the permission of the young people. Two interviews were not taped; one at the request of the pupil, and one because the tape recorder broke down at the start of the discussion. Following the first two or three interviews, the tape player was always given to the young person to operate. They were asked to hold it or sit with it by them and to start and stop the tape as they wished. This was seen as an important way of signalling that control of the interview was shared. Most sat with it on their lap, perhaps glad in the initial few minutes to have something practical to do. In a further effort to put young people at ease there was always a selection of board games set to one side of the room. It was explained



that should anyone wish to take a break or if the interview finished early then we could either chat or play a game.

A checklist was used at the beginning of each interview to ensure the reiteration of the importance of confidentiality, anonymity and consent which had been set out in the information booklet sent to home. Young people were informed that they would be given the opportunity to comment and review their contributions and were asked to indicate whether they would prefer a written transcript or an audio tape recording for this purpose. Only one young man decided not to proceed with the interview at this stage and he returned to class. While I was pleased that at least one young person had felt able to make an active choice about participation, and perhaps not an easy one, his guidance teacher commented with exasperation that he 'could easily have just done it' when she learned of his withdrawal, reinforcing a sense of how difficult it is to talk about meaningful consent in the school situation.

It was perhaps disappointing, if not surprising, that none of the young people suggested meeting outwith school. Although this might have given rise to practical difficulties, it was an early attempt to make clear that there were opportunities for the participants to negotiate; emphasising a belief in informed consent. That not one of the participants responded to this suggests that the letters home were seen, perhaps, as letters of information rather than genuine request. As with the guidance teacher's comment noted above, this raises the questions of the capacity of power of young people to make choices about whether to be involved in research in school situations, as well as raising a more general question about power relations and self-efficacy in schools. Having noted this, however, it was clear within the interviews that many of these young people were eager to tell their story and seemed pleased to have an opportunity to reflect in a serious way about the issues of exclusion, disruption, systems of discipline, their own attitudes to the curriculum and plans for the future.

As intended, the semi-structured interview schedule was used as a flexible guide, with each interview covering the same topics, but varying in the amount of time spent on each

area of discussion. Once the discussions were formally brought to a close, and the tape switched off, most participants remarked how fast the time had gone or that they had enjoyed talking about themselves. At worst, the interview was 'better than French anyway!' In the four interviews which finished early three young people chose to play a game, while one was happy to chat until the school bell rang for the next period.

## **Method of Analysis**

The method of analysis reflects the value placed on the integrity of these interviews as rich, personal accounts of experience. The analysis seeks to identify 'indigenous themes – themes that characterise the experience of informants' (Ryan and Bernard 2003;4) but also allow larger social and cultural themes to emerge by examining the setting and context, the perspectives and ways of thinking about people, objects, processes, events and relationships (Bogdan and Biklen 1982).

The interviews were coded individually, focussing on the context of experience and the experiences themselves. Within the coding of contextual data, the following broad headings were identified: basic personal details, previous school experience, present school experience (including friendships, difficulties with peers, adult relations and 'work') and wider issues such as school and community, school and home, and plans for the future. All participants, whether regarded as disruptive or not, were also asked their views on different kinds of exclusion and in the coding of this data there was a focus on issues of disruption, official Exclusion, unofficial and hidden exclusion and alternatives to exclusion. In addition to the interview transcripts, a brief personal profile was compiled for each participant and documentary analysis undertaken of relevant school records. The fieldnotes, referred to earlier, were also available, and these note critical incidents and 'drivers'. These 'drivers' are a collection of moments in the interviews which are annotated with underlinings or exclamation marks writ bold. They include critical moments for the researcher as well as critical incidents described by the young

people, and it was felt that they might act as precursors to themes emerging; as ways to begin to understand the data. This analysis of the context and content of these interviews was also assisted by an awareness of the need to consider what was not there, the absences and silences, and how a questioning of these might contribute to the overall analysis.

Documentary analysis, fieldnotes, transcriptions, oral and written respondent validation, personal profiles and awareness of the silences, then, were all brought to bear on the data from the interviews to make for meaningful discussion of the findings as individual experience and as the experience of the group as a whole. Together these allow for the testing of the notion of a framework of 'layers of exclusion' discussed in detail later. They allow for some exploration of exclusion as a gendered experience and also allow for later discussion of the relationship between these young people and the generality of pupils.

## **Exploring the Findings from the Individual Interviews**

### **Previous School Experience**

A range of questions was asked at the start of the interview, designed to set young people at their ease and to begin to develop a 'geography' of the experience of exclusion. Discussion opened with talk about previous school experience. Twelve of the 17 participants reported that they had enjoyed their primary school years more than secondary, although one said he had enjoyed nursery most of all (F). This group of twelve comprised eight of the ten young men and four of the seven female participants. Reasons given by both young women and young men centred on personal and social relationships as well as the formal curriculum; 'I just felt better cos in class you got to play at different things' (Q). Another remarked that it was 'a better laugh. You didn't get stressed so much' (G). 'I knew more people there...that's where I met my pals' said one young woman (B). There was reference to the way that 'girls and boys were all best friends there', a heartfelt comment from a young man (A) who clearly missed the easy

camaraderie of his early childhood. Another (B) added that she had liked primary school because there was only one teacher. These responses reflect findings of previous research into young people's perceptions of school (Gordon 2001, Munn *et al.* 2000, Blishen ed.1969) and statistics on official Exclusion levels which also suggest that the primary years are more settled for many children. Although the reasons offered by participants were generally very similar there were also some slight differences. A proportionately higher number of young men than young women expressed a preference for their primary school experience. Interestingly, the idea that there had been less pressure or stress in primary school was noted by three male participants, but no female participants. Two young women noted positive feelings about school work in remembering primary but no young men made such comments. This difference may be understood in the light of the study by Osler *et al.* on girls and exclusion which notes 'girls greater adaptability to the academic routines of the school' (2002;54).

Five of the 17 participants, two young men and three young women, said that they preferred their secondary experience, perhaps suggesting that for them at least, primary school had been more difficult. Three of these were described by the school as socially isolated, and the other two had been temporarily Excluded during their time in the school. It seems surprising that among this small but disparate group, who nevertheless might all be assumed to have poor relationships with and within schools, such a preference was expressed. Interestingly, these five were also all pupils in the two high Excluding schools, and this may be a relevant factor in considering the kinds of reasons they gave for preferring their present school. Although one young woman remarked with candour that secondary was preferable because it brought her closer to a time when she would be free to leave school, another spoke about how she 'felt kind of maturer' in secondary school, while a third participant said,

'...everybody here tells me, other people tell me, I'm stupid, an' that. But Mrs A and the Head of Year, says, "No...I can get my stuff done". And if I cannae do something they'll stick by me'

(R).



This may indicate that schools, and perhaps these high Excluding schools in particular, offer relationships seen as supportive by some young people experiencing a range of difficulties, even where these include conflict with the authority of the school.

Also part of this discussion about school history was a question about pupil mobility; asking whether participants had moved schools other than at the usual times of transition from nursery to primary and primary to secondary. A high proportion, eight of the 17 participants, at least one in each school, had attended schools outwith their own catchment since starting school in Primary 1. Six young people also had experience of multiple school moves, four of these having changed school during secondary although only one person had attended more than two primary or secondary schools. Multiple school moves is a known characteristic associated with official Exclusion, and therefore it is interesting to note that while the young people who had moved school often were more likely to be pupils in high Excluding schools, they were not necessarily Excluees themselves. There was no discernible gender pattern to this. This was one of the first of many indications that known characteristics of Excluees are not confined only to this group but are shared much more broadly among marginalised pupils. There has been relatively little research into the effects of school moves among the general population although Dobson and Henthorne (1999) and Demie's recent studies (2002) suggest that there can be serious implications for attainment and achievement overall and it seems likely that the more unsettled or transient the school environment, the more reasonable to assume that there will be an impact on those already more vulnerable or unsettled themselves (MacBeath 1999).

Some young people offered an explanation of these moves. Two remarked that their choice of secondary school had been influenced by the reputation of different schools and another two referred to difficulties with peers at previous schools. One young woman offered first a practical reason; 'I think it [the new school] was closer to the house...', and then added, more defensively, '...and because the social worker accused my mum of starving us and neglecting us' (E). She went on to deny strongly that the social worker

had any reasonable claim to involvement with her family. This was the only direct reference by any participant to social work support.

Only one account referred specifically to the academic expectations of different schools, and it came in the interview with the young woman referred to above. As an academically able pupil with erratic attendance and a difficult set of home circumstances, she said that her happiest times had been at a school where academic success and social success were seen as equally important and added,

‘They actually encouraged you to do your best. At [Primary School X] they wanted you to fail. That’s what I felt - that they wanted me to fail. At [Primary school Y] they were a lot nicer bunch of people and I got along with them’.

(E)

### Experience of Present School

Reflection on memories of previous schools led on to discussion about how participants felt about their present school. There was talk about friendships, enmities and strategic coalitions as well as much comment about teachers and ‘work’. There were questions about time between classes, lunchtime activities and use of space around the school. I was also interested to learn more about any support they felt they had received to help with the transition to secondary school, and since then.

### *Friendships*

It is recognised that in any interview with a stranger the subject of peer relations is likely to be a sensitive area of discussion for many young people and may be even more so for some of these young people. However, there emerged some very thought-provoking contributions here as well as some equally thought-provoking silences. The participants, whatever their personal experience of official Exclusion, tended to respond using very similar stock phrases when asked about friendships in school. Eight described their peer relationships in positive, unambiguous terms, saying, for example, ‘I get on with all of them’ (G) or ‘I get on quite well with people’ (Q). These eight were spread across all

four schools and included both young men and women. The frequent occurrence of the term 'get on with' suggested that it was an important marker of social acceptance among all the participants, but there was also a sense that these were guarded responses; critical moments, and that this was indeed a sensitive area and that any probing was unwelcome. Significantly, no-one reported having only poor peer relationships, despite teachers' expressed concerns about these particular young people and the prevalence of peer difficulties as an underlying feature of the Exclusion statistics.

However, there were further comments from young people in each school which alluded, albeit sometimes obliquely, to more complicated peer relations. Among those who had been Excluded for example, one said, 'Daniel - he's been in my class since Primary 1. If you're in a fight he sticks up for you' (M). Another spoke ruefully about the complications of his friendships, 'To be honest, they're not very good pals. They get me in a lot of trouble' (R), before going on to describe a series of serious physical fights in which he and his friends had been involved. For some of the participants, especially those described as troublesome by teachers, there was a perceptible tension between valorisation of loyalty to, or of, a friend, and anxiety about the danger or 'trouble' brought by that friendship. Previous research discussed earlier (Chaplain 1996, Martino 1999) has explored male understandings of friendship in this context but the finding from Gordon and Grant's large Scottish survey of approximately 2500 young people at a similar stage of secondary school that 'boys are more afraid of violence than girls' (1997;171) suggests that these responses, though brief, are important and relate to very genuine concerns among young men. Less widespread, but also surprising was an indication of direct involvement in violence by a small number of the young women in these interviews; a topic expanded upon in later discussions about official Exclusion itself.

Among those described by teachers as socially isolated and not disruptive, there was a range of responses to questions about friendships, from an almost inaudible 'it's okay' (L) which nevertheless held a warning against any further inquiry, to a moving account of one young man's struggle to get through the school day,

‘... depends which class. Registration class is okay. I’m used to everybody and they have a good laugh. Me and my friend Alastair, we go behind the school so people don’t slag us. Every day people shout or slag me...if you tell the teacher you’re just more rejected... I just get by’.

(D)

This young man talked about a friend by name, but described him almost as someone with whom he takes refuge from his peers, rather than a friend with whom he has fun or interests in common. He later added that he does not see this pupil outside school, reinforcing an idea of this as a ‘strategic coalition’ (Martino 1999) rather than true friendship.

Extended responses such as this one were relatively unusual, and there seemed to be a number of possible reasons for this. I have suggested elsewhere that many young people are reticent because they are poorly equipped to talk with confidence and at length about their own strengths, successes and failings. However, in what they do say and what they omit to say, there is still much of interest. It is notable that the more ambivalent comments about friendship, though not always extensive, were more common among participants in the high Excluding schools. This may simply reflect the greater prevalence of disruption and unsettled social relations in these schools. However, in the discussion of the focus group findings to follow, a willingness to chat and an enthusiastic openness of the generality in these same schools is also noted. This suggests that a more complex reading of these ambivalent comments may be necessary. It may be that such comments reveal a greater confidence in admitting the complexities of human relationships in general. It may be that there is a greater candour or familiarity in talking with adults about difficulties in more turbulent schools. Perhaps there is a link with the observation noted in the process of seeking access and consent to schools, that staff in high Excluding schools have a much more highly developed language for talking about personal and social difficulties. It may be that young people themselves are more finely attuned in this situation, and develop, in Smyth and Hattam’s terms, a richer ‘sociological vocabulary’ (2001;167).



It is also interesting that ambivalence in talk about friendship was more common among the female participants overall than the males whose responses tended to be briefer, more wary perhaps, reflecting their need to maintain a reputation as indifferent; 'cool' or 'hard' (Padfield 2002, Frost 2003). This finding again echoes Gordon and Grant (1997) who note that the young men 'were more likely than girls to describe themselves as confident...[while] girls were much more likely to describe themselves not only as unconfident but as confused' (1997;167).

Most young people talked of 'mucking about outside the school, chatting and 'hanging about' during breaks and lunchtime. Much of this activity was based in the school or school grounds although only three, all male, were regularly involved in structured activities; football team, basketball, chess and computing clubs. For the two much more socially isolated young people these formal breaks seemed to be traumatic and bewildering, with one commenting, '[I like] childhood favourites but apparently I'm too old for that' (D).

No-one discussed more intimate or sexual relationships in the context of friendships, but two particular features of good friendship were referred to frequently; the longevity of a friendship, and the size of a friendship group. Across schools, and regardless of gender, it seemed that it was a 'badge of honour' to be able to talk about a very long term friendship, going back to P1 or nursery school, with someone of the same sex. On the other hand, in talk about the size of the group of friends, although there did not seem to be any school differences, there did appear to be a clear gender dimension. Among young men identified as troublesome but also among those who were not, it seemed that to have a large group of friends, between 20 and 30, signalled social success. Talking about an incident arising out of an ongoing gang rivalry, one young man noted that, 'If we get battered I've got more pals cos there's about 30 of us – on a bad day!' (R). Another talked about how his friendships revolved around football and 'mucking about', saying that during school lunchtimes '20 – 25 of us go down to the park' (C). Returning to the discussion regarding the complexity of friendship it is not difficult to understand how the desired large size of the male social group offers status and security but also

threat to other, male, groups and individuals. Further confirmation of the significance of the size of the friendship group came from a much less street-wise young man who, in an attempt to explain why he had only one main friend, remarked, 'There's just one I hang about with in school, cos you know what it's like, if you hang about in a group, that leads to trouble'(A). He added that he did not like 'schemey people, like hard nuts, and fighting', suggesting that these were for him, at least, some of the attributes of the large group, gang or 'posse'. Interestingly, too, a young woman who told me with pride that she was 'the only lassie' (P) in her local 'posse' also talked about the size of the gang.

Most female talk about unstructured activity around school suggested that these young women occupy overlapping but separate physical space from their male peers during free time, and that although their use of space and activities overlap with those of their male counterparts, there is more emphasis on 'chat' and sometimes more time spent away from the school site. For most of the young women, there did not seem to be the same importance attached to the size of the friendship group. They talked about a 'bunch' or a particular group of named friends with whom they 'hung about' or 'mucked about'. No shared physical or structured activity was referred to as a complement to those noted by the young men.

### *Difficult Peer Relations*

In one of the early interviews, a young man stated, 'I hate the school cos I tend to get bullied' but then made it clear that he did not wish to discuss this further. Such open expression of difficulties in peer relations was not repeated in the interviews to follow. It was rare for any of these young people to express dislike of a particular young person and even the most voluble participants offered noticeably little on the subject, though, by contrast, identifiable groups such as 'saddos' or 'schemies' or 'nids' were sometimes openly derided. There were times, however, when I felt aware as an adult that with few words, a very clear message was conveyed about status and peer relations. One such comment came from a young man regarded by school staff as being at risk of Exclusion and indeed during my time in school, was allegedly involved in breaking into cars in a

college car park; an incident which staff saw as potentially the 'final straw'. When asked how he felt about any disruption by others in class, he responded with the full weight of someone who was clearly in a position of power in his peer group by saying, 'Naebody annoys us' (K). Although it is not possible to generalise from this one instance, it is intriguing that this young man had not thus far been Excluded. It offers a new perspective on one of the original research questions and the interest in understanding how it is that some pupils become officially Excluded while others do not. It reinforces the notion that the issue of peer relations in school may play a very significant part in understanding the connections between different kinds of exclusion.

### *Adult Relations*

In view of current public concerns about discipline in schools and reports of increasing tension between pupils and teachers (Scottish Executive 2004), I was interested to learn more about how these young people perceived their relationships with teachers and other adults in school; to whom they might look for help and when, and how this might vary in different schools or according to gender or relationship with school. Because all the interviews took place in school this may have influenced the participants in their reflections. Certainly, in contrast with discussions about peer relations, they had much to say on the matter and in keeping with findings from previous research (Rudduck *et al.* 1996, Rudduck 2001) much of this was very positive. This is now explored in detail.

All 17 young people made both positive and negative comments about adults in school, but, significantly, 15 of them made more positive comments than negative ones. In terms of the number of comments made, there were twice as many positive comments overall. Given the problematic but apparently very different relationships these particular young people have with their schools, it was even more interesting to find that there was a very even spread of positive comments from pupils identified as being in the different layers of exclusion. This may be usefully viewed in the light of longitudinal research by Croxford (2003) which notes that young people across the UK are becoming increasingly positive about their school experience.

Responses focussed on those adults who were the most well-liked or most supportive, and in which situations, and the findings here reveal much of interest about the range of relationships in school. Subject teachers in secondary schools received the highest number of positive comments (16), followed by Guidance Teachers (8) and Assistant Head Teachers (AHTs) of Guidance (7). While bearing in mind the small number of participants, and the limited opportunities for generalisation, this finding is interesting for a number of reasons, particularly as the categories of adult were all identified by the young people themselves and not the researcher. These young people are often assumed to have closer communication and relationships with guidance teachers than the generality of pupils in schools, and it might then be expected that the latter would receive the highest number of positive comments from this group of young people. However, there is much more comment about subject teachers, using terms such as 'help', 'understand', 'strict', 'explaining', 'cool', 'happy' and 'funny'. The Guidance Teachers are talked about as offering 'support'. They also 'help' but this is in terms of 'sorting it out' and 'building my confidence'. It may be that the subject teachers are more often talked about because it is a safer topic of conversation, less likely to lead the interview discussion on to more sensitive or personal issues but such talk also suggests that these young people, far from being universally disaffected, place value on work and subject teachers support with work, particularly where teachers are also supportive of external issues for those pupils. This finding is succinctly expressed by one young woman in a video-recorded interview as follows, 'it cannae be one or other. They've got to come together' (MacBeath 1997).

One other unexpected finding in these comments lies in the relatively high number of positive comments made about AHTs Guidance. These members of the school management team occupy a difficult position as the conduit between guidance and discipline in schools, in a system which has long acknowledged the tension between the two. This may be understood as a clear compliment to all these adults, but may also reflect something of the power of their position and their capacity to effect change on behalf of individual pupils. It should also be noted that for four young people, other



adults were seen as very important. These included a janitor, support workers from external agencies, an educational psychologist and a church counsellor.

Many of the comments and remarks made about all these adults were focussed on personal attributes, for example, 'good at explaining' or 'moany'. Some were extremely positive, such as, 'She's brilliant. She treats everybody like gold!' (Q), while many others described specific events such as support at the time of transition to secondary school, for example, 'If I'd never got it I would have been a bit more scared' (R). It was also possible to identify instances where young people were talking about different kinds of support; personal support, social support or academic support. Talking about personal support she had received with home issues, one young woman with attendance difficulties said, 'Mrs X has been an excellent help...She let all the teachers know what was happening and they were saying, "Fair enough. We'll help you as much as possible"' (E). She went on to make reference to the ethos of the school with the comment, 'This is the sort of school that everybody in the school is a team and if you work together then such and such will work' (E). Thomson and Holland talk of an 'ethic of reciprocity' (2002;107) and this was apparent in many of the comments made by young people; 'If you're sound with him, he's sound with you' (M).

There were two references to bullying and the support young people had received to 'sort it out', but the greatest number of positive comments centred, as noted above, on an appreciation for support with the formal curriculum, with academic work. These included the numerous mentions of teachers who were 'helpful' in a general sense with work, but also some more specific praise; 'Mr X keeps my jotters and keeps me organised and realises when I'm stuck and he's really good at explaining things' (G) or 'The PE teachers told me yesterday I could do Standard Grade PE next year if I wanted to' (F). This last comment was one of a number of occasions when the words on the page cannot themselves convey the strength of feeling and the pride which were so evident when this young man spoke. A critical moment, a 'driver'; this comment and the silence around it again foregrounded the importance and the inter-connectedness of academic

attainment and personal relationships in school for these young people, also noted elsewhere (MacBeath 1997).

Negative comments were often very general, paralleling negative comments made about peer relations; noting that a teacher was 'nippy' or 'grumpy'. However, three young people noted a lack of support when there had been issues at home, and one clearly vulnerable young man spoke about the lack of effective support from teachers in dealing with verbal abuse by his peers. Four expressed frustration at an individual teacher's attitude and one of these became very angry, saying, 'Oh my God...she's like a teacher that doesn't care about children. She says, "You can do what you want. I've got all my grades" and everything. She's just nasty'(B). Again, this comment about her teacher, a Guidance Teacher, was much more strongly expressed than the written words can convey, and much more strongly expressed than much else in this interview.

While it is important to note these more negative remarks, a very strong picture of the young people's regard for adults emerges overall. This may, as suggested, in part be a reflection of the site of the interviews but there is no doubting the strength that many of these young people seemed to draw from adult relationships in school. They seemed to value in particular the support of subject teachers and the support given with academic work, but also make a number of other more general positive comments. These comments are in sharp contrast to the more uniform, more guarded comments made when talking about peer relationships.

I have briefly noted that, contrary to expectation, there seemed to be more similarities than differences between pupils in the different schools, and young women and young men. Attention now turns to this in more detail and to an exploration of the experience of these young people as pupils in different kinds of school, and to whether or not there are differences in the relationships of young people in the two high and two low Excluding schools, and whether there is a difference in their perception of adults depending on whether they are seen as 'troubled' or 'troublesome' by teachers.

Looking at the pairs of schools (Table 4.2), a similarity between the schools emerges strongly. Many positive comments were made by young people across all four schools and each school contributed an equal proportion of the small number of negative comments overall. It seems surprising, given the varying Exclusion rates and levels of internal disruption, that the young people's views are so similar.

Table 4.2 Adult relations in the study schools

School	Name	Number of Positive Comments	Number of Negative Comments
School 1	A	4	4
	B	5	4
	C*	5	1
School 2	D*	6	2
	E*	7	3
	F	7	2
	G*	3	2
		Total = 37 (from 7 pupils)	Total = 18 (from 7 pupils)
School 3	H	3	1
	J	1	3
	K*	1	5
	L	3	2
School 4	M*	8	1
	N	4	2
	P*	3	1
	Q	5	1
	R*	4	1
	S*	3	3
		Total = 35 (from 10 pupils)	Total = 20 (from 10 pupils)

Shaded area = high Excluding schools

Fullest praise for adults = \*

Strongest negative comment about adults = \*

Although there are proportionately slightly fewer positive comments from pupils in high Excluding schools there is approximately the same number of negative comments from pupils in both pairs of schools.

It is also interesting to consider whether Excluees, or those seen as being at risk of Exclusion by teachers, or those marginalised in less obvious ways have more or less positive comment to make about the adults in their schools.

*Table 4.3 Adult relationships and 'layers of exclusion'*

Layer	Name	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
Layer 1 (N= 9)	A	4	4
	C	5	1
	G	3	2
	J	1	3
	M	8	1
	P	3	1
	Q	5	1
	R	4	1
	S	3	3
		Total = 36 (approx 5 '+' each)	Total = 17 (approx 2 '-' each)
Layer 2 (N=2)	F	7	2
	K	1	5
		Total = 8 (approx 4 '+' each)	Total = 7 (approx 4 '-' each)
Layer 3 (N= 6)	B	5	4
	E	7	3
	D	6	2
	H	3	1
	L	3	2
	N	4	2
		Total = 28 (approx 5 '+' each)	Total = 14 (approx 2 '-' each)

*Note: Comments are mostly but not always about present secondary school.*

Again, it is noted with some surprise that the balance of positive and negative comments is similar throughout the 'layers of exclusion'. That only two pupils interviewed were seen as being 'at risk of Exclusion' by their school means that it is difficult to make a useful comparison but elsewhere the findings are quite striking, with equally strong expressions of positive regard from those who have never come into contact with the discipline systems of their respective schools and from those who have been Excluded;



discussed later, many of the young people, both in individual interviews and in the focus groups, were scathing in their condemnation of their school's discipline processes. In the search to understand these unexpected findings, I suggest that it may support the notion that the experience of being a pupil *per se* is more important than the experience of being a pupil in a particular school (Munn, Johnstone and Chalmers 1992). It certainly supports the notion of young people's perceptions as discriminating; that they do not conflate the failings of school with views about the individual adults who work in that school system (Osler *et al.* 2002, Hamill and Boyd 2002). This may provide an answer to the concerns expressed earlier about possible deleterious effects of tension between adults in authority in school.

Finally, the question of the gender of participants is considered. It is often assumed that young women and men have different relationships with their teachers, male and female, and that this will be apparent in their views. However, among both the young women and young men interviewed, an equal balance of positive and negative comments was found. Both groups made twice as many more positive comments than negative overall. This suggests that both young women and young men share a strong positive regard for adults in school.

Fifteen of the interviews, with nine of the ten males and six of the seven females, also discussed whether or not they thought that teachers treated each sex equitably. This was an area where some very strong views were expressed. Four of the young men and three of the young women thought that teachers were prejudiced against them. One young man said, 'Sometimes girls get away with more. Female teachers are usually more sensitive to girls and not to boys, but the male teachers – they are just, like, normal' (A). Another said, 'Both [male and female teachers] prefer girls. They think girls dinnae dae nothing. They've got a better name for themselves' (K), a further reminder of the perceived importance of reputation in school processes (Padfield 2002, Hamill and Boyd 2002, Thomson and Holland 2002, Cullingford and Morrison 1996). A typical comment from a female pupil was, 'If it's a guy teacher, the guys go first, so that's not very fair! If the girls are speaking they get told to be quiet, but if the boys continue to speak then they just

get off with it' (S). Two of the male participants expressed frustration at the ease with which girls are given permission to leave class to go to the toilet, highlighting both the level of control which is accepted as normal in school, and perhaps a confusion or mistrust on the part of the young men about the needs of their female peers. This sense of injustice centred on the same issue for these seven young people, and set up an opposition or 'polarisation' (Thomson and Holland 2002;106) not encountered elsewhere in the study.

Eight other young people felt that teachers did not make any distinction on the basis of gender, though none expanded on this view with the same vehemence as those who felt that there was discrimination. It is interesting that such clear divisions emerged on the question of gendered attitudes by teachers, and not elsewhere. The confidence with which the arguments were made suggests that this is a common topic of discussion among young people, but also perhaps one which may be part of a larger questioning of identities and roles in schools and beyond.

### *Work, Achievement and Attainment*

Discussions about the formal academic curriculum and attitudes to it, were not as extensive as those about relationships, but contained a wide range of associated themes and some very interesting comments nonetheless. As well as subject likes and dislikes, there was discussion of learning difficulties, absence and work, coping, ability, attainment, choice and motivators.

All the participants readily commented on subject likes and dislikes and all reported that they had a favourite subject. I had envisaged that this might be a potentially sensitive part of the discussion for the more disaffected pupils but most were very relaxed. The most popular subjects were Drama, English, Physical Education (PE) and Craft, Design and Technology (CDT), though nearly all secondary school subjects other than Modern European Languages were popular with at least one person. Reasons were not always given but six young people linked their preference to enjoyment of the subject area. One

said, 'For fun I quite like Drama and Music but at the moment my strongest subject would probably be English' (E). Another said, 'Home Eccy. It's got to be! I love cooking!' (S). Care has to be taken in interpreting what may be the silences in the reasons given, as young people were often very critical of their own abilities. Many comments about personal strengths and skills were very tentative, for example, 'I wish I would get a good mark and I think that I might but not as good as I want' (B). The comment by the young woman about her 'strongest subject' above was unusual enough to point up the lack of such confidence elsewhere in these discussions.

Few individual subjects were named specifically as being unpopular although English had the honour of being noted both as a favourite subject for some and 'the worst' for others. Young people seemed surprisingly comfortable talking about what made work difficult for them, 'Sometimes the work is too hard and sometimes I just couldn't be bothered. When I tell them I can't do it they just say, "Try it. You might be able to do it", but I know I can't' (B). Although undiagnosed learning difficulties have often been cited as a major source of disaffection and exclusion these discussions were not so easily categorised, and the young people seemed to have a range of abilities; musical, practical, academic and sporting. In contrast with the discussions about peer relationships and the often homogenous, wary responses, comments here were varied and talked of reasons for finding work difficult, both connected and not directly connected to school experience. Much of what the young people had to say about work revealed ways in which their active participation was affected by other aspects of their lives. One young man said, 'I started not really coping with my work cos I had flashbacks [after a friend's death]' (A). A young woman described how difficult she was finding Music because 'I can't write music, probably cos I missed quite a bit of 1<sup>st</sup> year' (E). Another explained that her worst experience in school was 'in English because I've got a problem with reading, and when the English teacher tells me to read and I stutter...it totally does your confidence in. It's so embarrassing!' (Q).

There was one very common feature of these discussions. As well as a reticence about abilities, there also seemed to be a confusion in talk about personal agency and ability.

Just as the young man referred to earlier had proudly explained that the PE department had told him he 'could do it', there were other instances where the most common way to talk about choice, change and decision-making in the context of academic work was to use the passive tense or to attribute the change to the work of a teacher. One young man talking about subject choice for Standard Grade explained, 'I didn't like it so I got changed to PE' (K). The implication here is that it was not him but a teacher who initiated the successful change to a subject he prefers and hopes to do well in. Another said, 'My history teacher...he really helped me, cos last year I got a five or something for my test and this year, I got top marks' (G). It seems interesting that successes such as these are so often made light of and personal agency denied. In a culture which may still be less than comfortable with the idea of celebrating success, it is possible that these young people may be losing out more than most.

It is perhaps obvious but nevertheless interesting that the word 'good', with all its connotations of morality, is the word that young people use most often in talking about academic ability, work and about teachers they like. This raises the question of how difficult it may be for those young people who by this stage of schooling may perceive themselves as 'bad' to also conceive of themselves as being 'good' at school. In the same way, common use of the term 'work' and all its connotations in connection with learning in school may foreshadow personal career paths and plans for the future.

Only five young people spoke about specific areas in which they had received a high grade for a piece of academic work. From the way they spoke, it was evident that four of these valued their achievements but one young woman, though clearly sharp and articulate, was scornful of academic achievement, and at pains to emphasise that doing well at school was not 'cool'. Dressed very obviously not in school uniform, but in tracksuit and branded trainers, with sovereign rings on every finger, there was an intriguing mismatch between her aggressive self-presentation as 'gang girl', and her quick thinking, accurate speed reading of the interview schedule and her articulate challenges to me as a researcher. When probed about her academic ability she replied reluctantly, 'Aye, when I can be bothered. I'm in the Credit class', quickly adding, 'But



I'm not going to do that when I leave. I don't need it'. Asked if teachers had told her she was academically able, she was scornful, 'All the time, man. Sick hearing it'(P). Like the conversation with the young man proud of being able to choose Standard Grade PE, this conversation seemed to form a critical moment, a focus, in the interviews. Unlike the young man, this young woman was challenging and articulate. Her comments are interesting not because they are representative. They are not. However, they do give cause for concern. Similarly, a young man (J) talking with admiration of his older cousin said, 'He was good [i.e. he was of high academic ability] but he never used to come. He cannae be bothered'. This young man seem to imply in his conversation that academic ability was something admirable but at the same time not something that was necessarily useful. The paradoxical combination of a spark, a shrewdness and a seeming rejection of academic aspiration, was a striking feature of these two interviews, and though not in the majority, are interesting in the way they focus attention on the risks for some of school achievement.

Overall, then, it seemed that these young people found it easier to talk about the difficulties they had with the formal curriculum than success, although listening to them, I was aware that there were successes. The majority of these young people were working towards national exams and yet they seemed unsure about how they might fare and what the results would mean in terms of future career plans. Many expected to follow career paths of other family members, for example, 'I'd like to be a classroom assistant like my mum'. Although four of the young people spoke of parental hopes that they would 'better themselves' in some way, only one spoke of the possibility of going on to higher education. MacBeath makes a timely suggestion that more attention be paid to the relationship between home and school rather seeing one or other as holding the answers; 'it is the nature of the movement between the communities of school and home that shapes the present and sets out the pathway to individual futures' (1999;14). Coupled with a general poverty of expectation, whatever its source, there often seemed to be a lack of confidence about the future and a lack of understanding of consequences. Only one spoke of hopes to go on to higher education, a very low number in view of findings

from Youthlink's recent survey of Scottish 11-16 year olds, two thirds of whom believed they would go to university (2003).

There was again a need to be sensitive to the silences here. The young man with severe dyslexia did not discuss it at all, though he did say he would look for an 'easy job' (J). There were two young women who alluded to the fact they had problems with eating, but said nothing else about their personal health or how this might impact on concentration levels or on their participation in HE, which they both liked and were studying at Standard Grade level. Likewise, those who had moved school more often than the norm did not discuss whether they felt this had affected their work.

There seemed to be little difference overall in the experiences of work and attitudes to work of the young people in different schools, or in terms of whether they had been in open conflict with authority in their schools. There was perhaps a slight difference in the talk of young women and men in general, with the former more likely to expand on responses they made. Again, the prevalence of similarity rather than difference in experiences of this group of young people is noted as surprising. In terms of how this brief summary of the discussions about work may assist in deepening an understanding of exclusion, this similarity seems to offer an important focus for analysis. All of these young people talked, however briefly, about a formal subject and sometimes two formal subjects which they liked. Some people also talked about aspects of the informal curriculum, for example, residential trips or outdoor education, but all referred to enjoyable aspects of the formal curriculum. It may be that these positive responses are influenced by the site of the interview, though this would not fully explain some of the very specific explanations and references. Despite difficulties with work, most of these young people continue to invest in it, perhaps partly because of the value they attach to the adult relationships in school, perhaps also because they value it for itself. It seems, then, that though an inappropriate curriculum may indeed play a part in increasing the disaffection and disengagement of some pupils, as Stoll and O'Keeffe (1998), Lamb (2000) and others have suggested, most of these young people seen by schools as

excluded in some sense continue to maintain their connections with school at least partly through 'work'.

### *Beyond School*

So far the context of experience of exclusion has focussed on the immediate environment in school; previous school experience and the present secondary situation; peer relationships and adult relationships, work and career plans. It is recognised, however, that the context of exclusion is much broader than this and that there are many other influences on the lives of excluded young people. Within the interviews, discussion also touched on the links between school and home life, and though not all young people talked about home and family life to the same extent, the responses again shed some further light on their perspectives and experiences. The themes which emerge from these comments centre on their leisure activities, friends outside school, health and family disruption or trauma.

Activities and pastimes were as varied out of school as they were in school and although many were common to all, for example, 'hanging around' or 'mucking about', there was a range of individual interests. As expected, involvement in sport; football, basketball, skiing, was common among the young men, though not for all. Fifteen of the participants spoke about activities outside the home after school. The remaining two young people, both young men, sadly seemed to be as isolated outside school as in it, and, as previously noted, seemed to have no peer contact at all after school hours. Overall, it seemed that those young people who were most isolated or marginalised within school were also the least likely to take part in casual, unstructured street-based activity, such as football, 'going out' or 'mucking about' out of school. They did not report any regular participation in youth groups or clubs in local community centres. They talked about watching TV, sitting indoors, reading, babysitting or other household and caring tasks.

More surprisingly, and at a stage when young people are usually thought to be seeking to break away from the family, 15 of the 17 participants talked about regular activities which included other immediate or extended family members. These ranged from 'line

dancing with my granddad and my cousin'(Q) to a young woman who described how she goes 'up to my big cousin's and have big parties an' that'(S). Although 'big parties' were a feature of other conversations, and perhaps contained a coded message about underage drinking and/or drug use, only two young people talked directly about involvement in offending behaviour. One of these was the young woman described earlier who had been so keen to portray herself as a member of the local 'posse' and the other a young man who had had some police involvement in the recent past. Only three young people were actively involved in a youth group, two in their local community and one in the town centre. These three had been involved over a long period and spoke with enthusiasm and confidence about the activities they enjoyed there. In two instances this involvement had led to their receiving individual support in the form of weekly counselling sessions at times of crisis, and this support was clearly valued. There was a sense in all the discussions that these young people did not usually travel far outside their local area, except occasionally to visit family members living further afield. The definition of 'local' was very local in most instances, so that when those who lived on a peripheral estate were asked whether they might go in to the city centre on a Saturday afternoon this seemed to be seen as highly unrealistic, perhaps likely to lead to 'trouble'.

Two of the young people in one of the high Excluding schools offered some insight into their perceptions of the relationship between school and community in their area.

Speaking with the same young man who had earlier expressed his appreciation of staff who 'stuck by him' in school (R) he commented, 'In school we're all friends with each other, but after school, the [Gang X] and [Gang Y] just want to kill each other'. As the conversation developed it emerged that fighting was very much a part of his social life. This idea, shared by the young woman who had said she was 'the only lassie' (P) in her gang, seemed interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly it seemed to suggest that there was a consensus that school was not the place to fight, and that gang rivalry had to be set aside in that place and time. This might also support the suggestion made by Thomson and Holland (2002) that schools are seen as relatively safe places for some vulnerable young people, 'providing an ethical oasis in an otherwise hostile environment' (2002;108). It might also suggest that when incidents do happen in school, that they may



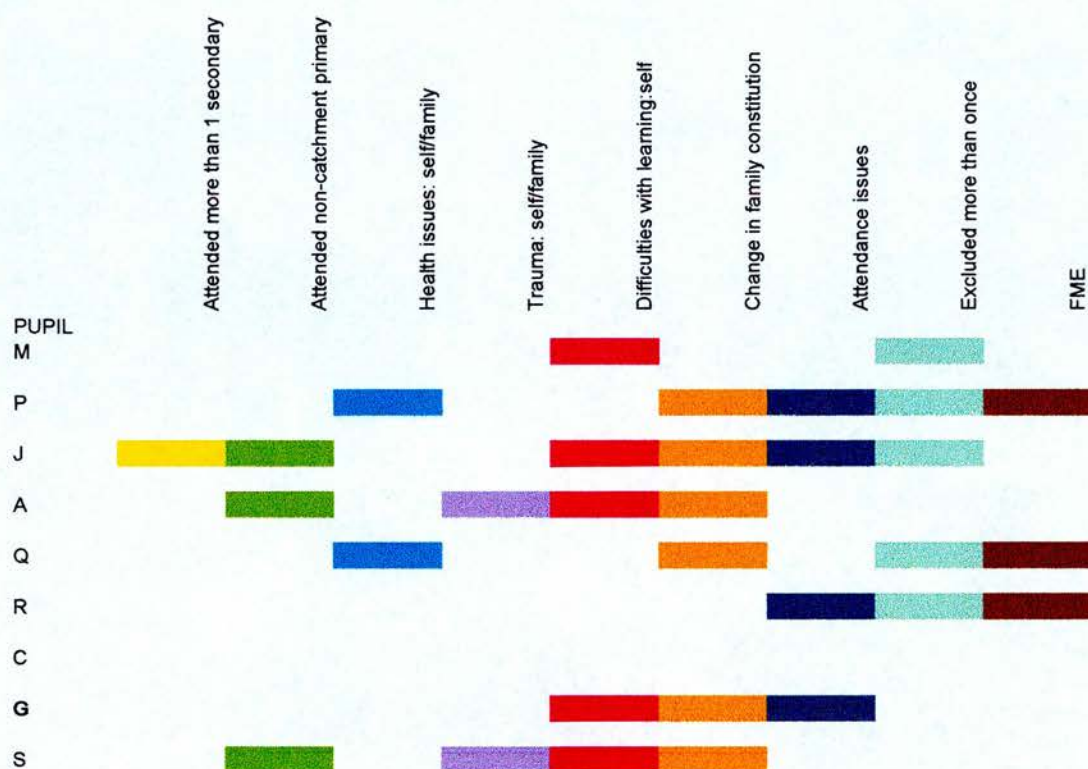
sometimes be best understood as the overspill of a larger problem in the community. In a more minor way, perhaps, it might also cast a different light on the traditional adult perception of the 'smokers corner', an issue noted in a number of discussions. Although traditionally seen by adults as a site of confrontation with school authority, it may also serve a dual and seemingly contradictory purpose, often moving possible confrontation outside the school premises, while maintaining an important contact with the safety offered by the school's sphere of influence.

The other interesting feature of this area of discussion was the young people's willingness to speak of health, disability or family issues. Not all did, but again in comparison with talk about difficulties in peer relations, there was an unexpected openness from many of the participants. In all, eight of the 17 young people, across all four schools reported health or disability issues affecting either themselves or someone in their close family. As they often referred to these issues very informally or without medical terminology, it was found useful to check these against the records held by schools. Only three of the four schools permitted this, and it is therefore possible that there are further details which may have been relevant but which were not available to the study. Some of these issues were relatively minor, but some were serious enough to have significant impact on school and personal life. These include the two young women referred to earlier who spoke of not eating, as well as a young man who had undergone a major ear operation in S1 and missed school for some time because of it. One young man had severe dyslexia and another who talked about having 'trouble with writing' (H) was formally recorded as having moderate learning difficulties and dyspraxia. Two spoke of younger siblings who were taking Ritalin, prescribed in connection with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder), and another said that her older brother was unemployed because he was 'not right in the head' (N) though there was no clarification of this statement available elsewhere.

Some of the participants also referred to changes in the family constitution and some linked this to activities outside school, referring to regular journeys to meet with a parent or step-parent or sibling living away from home. Seven of the young people referred to

their parents being separated and one other young woman talked about her father's death two years previously. Again, these young people included both young men and young women from all four schools and in each 'layer of exclusion', reinforcing the notion that the characteristics most often associated with those Excluded from school are not exclusive to them, but a feature of the lives of other marginalised young people. The tables below show this in more detail.

**Table 4.4 LAYER 1: Pupils who have been officially Excluded from school once or more**



Pupil G: no access to PPR. All other information is a combination of interview data and documentary analysis

Total number of officially Excluded interview participants =9

**Table 4.5 LAYER 2: Pupils at risk of official Exclusion**

		Attended more than 1 secondary	Attended non-catchment primary	Health issues: self/family	Trauma: self/family	Difficulties with learning: self	Change in family constitution	Attendance issues	FME
PUPIL	F								
	L								

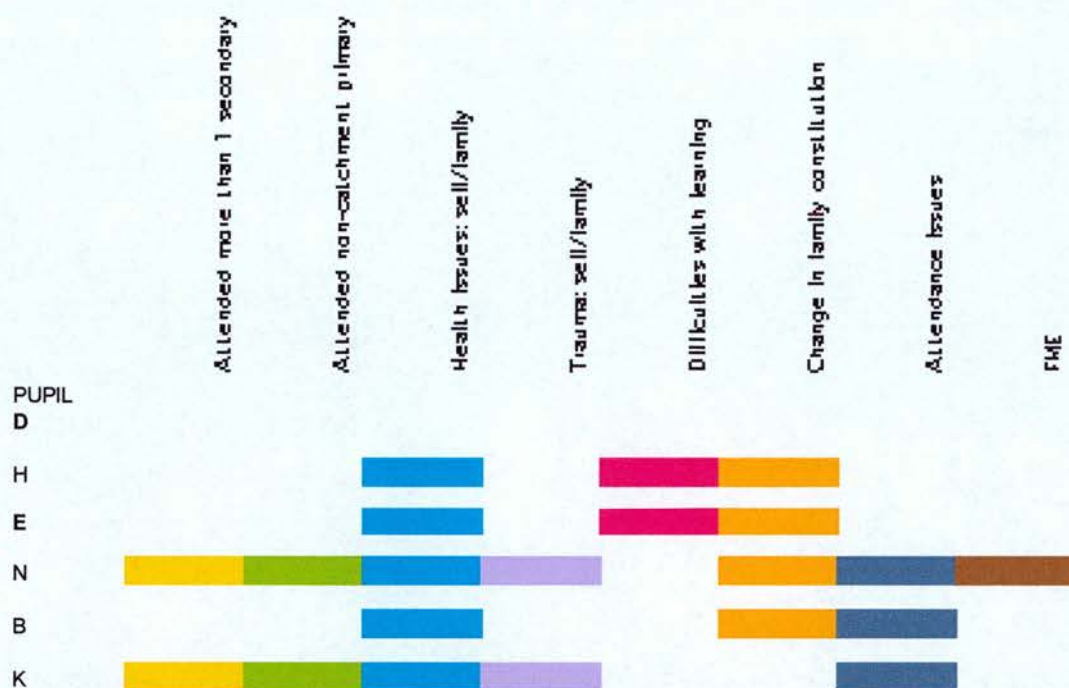
Pupil F: no access to PPR.

All other information is a combination of interview data and documentary analysis

Total number of interview participants at risk of official Exclusion = 2



Table 4.6 LAYER 3: Pupils excluded in a broader sense



Pupils D and E: no access to PPRs

All other information is a combination of interview data and documentary analysis

Total number of interview participants excluded in broader sense = 6

## Experiences of Exclusion

As the focus now shifts from an examination of contexts to an examination of accounts of the experience of exclusion per se, this finding provides a significant point of reference. It begins to frame a response to one of the main questions of the research, seeking to elucidate the central defining experiences of these young people's lives, and to ask how we can best understand the place of exclusion in their terms. These explorations of context have revealed important aspects of what is termed here the 'geography' of these young people's lives.

Thus far what is most striking about these young people is not how different their lives are from those of most young people but how very similar. This is important in two distinct but related ways. Firstly, by emphasising context, and focussing on more than simply 'deviance' or 'vulnerability', the findings are able to show that these young people, whatever kind of exclusion they are thought to experience, have more in common with typical pupils than has previously been acknowledged. Secondly, and equally relevant, these findings suggest that, despite widely differing perceptions of them by schools, these young people share more in common with each other than previously recognised. Although young people in general are often anxious about their social relationships, these young people share a marked reticence or wariness in talk about peer relations; more than expected and more than in their talk about other sensitive issues, such as learning difficulties or health issues. Also importantly, as noted above, they have been shown to share more of the known characteristics of Excluees than expected; a set of characteristics also known to be associated with risks of wider social exclusion.

It is in this context that there now follows a review and analysis of the views and experiences of these young people specifically with regard to Exclusion: to disruptive behaviour by themselves and others; to official Exclusion from school; alternatives to Exclusion from school; to hidden exclusion and issues of attendance.

## *Disruption*

As previously noted, some but not all of the participants (11) were described by school staff as disruptive. Sixteen young people were asked how they felt when classmates were disruptive and 14, including seven of the nine Excludees, reported that they felt that their work was affected at least some of the time when others were unsettled, saying for example, 'I will get distracted and taken away' (B) or 'Yes, it's distracting if you're trying to finish a bit of work. You can't help looking up' (C). Of the other two participants, one felt he was able to 'just get on' (M) and another said, 'It helps me if there's a wee conversation' (K), though even this comment may be understood as an acknowledgement of there being some effect. It is interesting that such a large number of these young people were able to say that they found disruptive behaviour affected them and that this included those who were seen by school as disruptive or who described themselves as disruptive in the interview.

Whereas teachers might, however, see all disruption in negative terms, there was much more ambivalence in the views of the young people. There were times when some were happy to be disrupted by others and other times when the disruption was unwelcome. Some said that they were 'put off' working while others were affected in the sense that they feel compelled to watch as events unfolded. As might be expected, the six participants identified by schools as quieter, socially marginalised or not disruptive spoke more about the negative effects of disruption, though even here it was noted by one that, 'It gives you a break from work' (D). Confounding any expectations of bravado, only one of the nine official Excludees reported that disruption had no detrimental effect at any time. Three of the Excludees said clearly that they were upset by the disruption of others, for example, 'I find it really irritating' (S) or 'Just say you're trying to finish a piece of work in Music and you can't think' (Q). Another two offered responses which suggested that the effects were variable. One young person talked about how it 'depends on the day' (P) and another commented, 'I just block them out. But if they're really nippin' ma heed, they get told to shut up [by me]' (R). This is again a sensitive area of discussion and perhaps particularly so for those in the group used to being labelled as

troublesome. Among those who talked of being disruptive themselves, there sometimes appeared to be a sense of resignation, a sense that 'it's just what people do...they want to muck about' (P) which suggested a lack of control. However, there was also at times a sense of an awareness of their own power; an awareness which also emerges in the findings of the generality of pupils, discussed later. One participant used a phrase of derision commonly heard in secondary schools when she said, 'Our RE teacher cannae handle us' and later added with indignation, 'She started crying and we weren't even doing much!' (Q). This phrase is interesting in the way it challenges the idea that pupils have no power in the classroom and also in the way it links with views on discipline. MacBeath notes a 'general view of secondaries as less disciplined places [than primaries]' (1989(a);9) and teachers who were felt to lack the skills to control disruption came in for some very harsh criticism in these interviews. This young woman's derision, however, acts as a reminder of the complexity of issues of discipline and power in school.

It is interesting too that no-one challenged the notion that disruption was associated mainly with what happens within classrooms, rather than outside, for example, in the corridor or school grounds. Furthermore, the talk about disruption or 'mucking about' seemed to be understood as a feature of teacher/pupil interaction, rather than pupil/pupil interaction, perhaps because as pupils they are so actively discouraged from operating their own sanctions against those who disrupt. No one took the opportunity to say how their social relationships, rather than, or as well as, work, might be affected by an unsettled classroom and few of the stories told here associated the term 'disruption' with more personal peer conflicts discussed elsewhere. However, it is clear that for the majority disruption was often if not always unwelcome and their responses echoed many of their earlier calls for teachers to be strict and fair.

These interviews offered a rare opportunity to discuss official Exclusion both with those who had experienced it directly and with those who had not, but who are revealed to share many other traumatic life experiences. Just as the focus group participants were asked to discuss disruption and official Exclusion even though some had much more direct personal experience of it than others, so too with the individual interviews there



was an interest here in gathering the views of all. The stories of their experiences, then, are intended to stand as a record of an experience unique to each individual and also as a set of accounts which can be analysed in terms of patterns of similarity and difference. The following aspects of the experience of official Exclusion were discussed with the participants and are now explored in detail: understanding of the process; effectiveness of Exclusion, reasons for Exclusion, the event of Exclusion itself; the role of home; return from Exclusion and finally, alternatives to Exclusion. These areas are similar to those explored in previous studies but contribute to the body of knowledge about exclusion by seeking comment from this much broader range of excluded young people.

### *Process of Official Exclusion*

The first area of discussion centred around an understanding of the process of official Exclusion. Fourteen of the participants said that they felt they understood something of the process. Only three young people reported that they felt they did not know anything of the process of Exclusion, although, concerningly, two of these, a young woman and a young man, had been Excluded on more than one occasion. It may be that they felt uncomfortable discussing the issue with me, a stranger, though this explanation seems unlikely as they both talked at length about other aspects of the experience of Exclusion.

The most common issues discussed by the others were reasons for Exclusions and the frequency of Exclusion in their school compared with other schools. This was one of the few occasions when most of the participants, regardless of whether they had been pupils at other secondary schools or not, ventured to compare their own school with others, though it was not clear why they felt so comfortable making these particular comparisons. Three took the opportunity to stress the perceived unfairness of some Exclusions. Most of the young people noted two specific kinds of behaviour as acceptable reasons for Exclusion; bullying and fighting. Although in official records reasons for Exclusion are often couched in terms of teacher/pupil confrontation there is noted earlier a concern in some of the literature that behind the blandness of such terms as 'general and persistent disobedience' lie difficulties in peer relations. It is particularly

helpful, then, to have these views from young people themselves, and to note that they focus on peer relations.

On the one hand it is encouraging that fighting and bullying are seen as so serious by many of these young people. On the other hand, their inarticulacy and repetition of stock phrases such as 'bullying' and 'fighting' may suggest that they are accustomed to see Exclusion used as a mechanical response to certain behaviours rather than a sanction of last resort where pupil/school relationships have broken down. At times it seemed that young people knew that such an approach was desirable but did not see it happening in practice. The Guidance on Exclusion from School (C8/03) recognises the importance of process as well as events which might lead to a decision to Exclude. Research on good practice and school Exclusion discussed earlier also reinforces the notion that a balance of consistency and flexibility is essential to the development of a positive school ethos. However, one participant recounted an incident involving a friend which he felt had led, unfairly, to Exclusion. He stated, 'I admit he did have a bad reputation but...' (G). This young man was clear that reputation rather than the particular circumstances of the incident described had contributed to the school's decision to Exclude in this case. Another young man who had been Excluded himself readily admitted that his behaviour had been dangerous when he lit a can of deodorant in a busy science classroom but he also criticised the school response as 'a quick reaction...they rushed it...they wanted to deal with it' (C), and that he thought his guidance teacher had not been 'allowed' to become involved because she would have 'stuck up' for him. The need to consider the circumstances surrounding any decision to Exclude were clear in conversation with him and typical of a small number of other accounts which seemed to imply the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the link between process and event. In a related question, there was an interest in finding out whether Exclusion was seen, as the official Guidance (C8/03), intends, as a last resort. Significantly, only two young people spoke about it in these terms, one describing it as a 'really, really desperate measure' (E) and the other saying 'it's really serious here' (S).

Overall, it appeared that understandings of the process of Exclusion were very limited, despite the initial claims of these young people. Participants' views on the frequency of the use of Exclusion in their own school revealed a wide range of perceptions and, interestingly, revealed that individuals' views on this were rarely consistent with others attending the same school, and rarely reflected an awareness of the school's actual level of official Exclusion. The question seemed to be one with which they were familiar and felt confident to speak but not one about which they actually had accurate information. Adult support or advocacy was rarely reported, though highly regarded when offered. No-one referred to the system of appeal against Exclusion. No-one referred to a maximum permitted number of days out of school, and one young man said he could not comment as he had 'never been Excluded only suspended', which, if confirmed, would be a clear breach of local and national guidelines. Though a lack of knowledge may be expected among those who are not disruptive, it is concerning that there is such a high level of misinformation among those Excluded.

### *Effectiveness of Official Exclusion*

The second major area of interest was in notions of the effectiveness of official Exclusion. These discussions about effectiveness opened with the question, 'Do you think Exclusion works?' There is much contestation about meanings of the term 'effectiveness' in academic and political discussion and it seemed important therefore to avoid making assumptions about a uniformity of views of young people in this area. The use of such an open and general question was intended, then, to allow different, grounded understandings of effectiveness to emerge from the young people themselves.

Most young people seemed to take this term 'worked' to mean 'effective in changing behaviour or improving the behaviour of the person Excluded'. Some very strong feelings were expressed on this issue, mostly against the notion that Exclusion 'worked', though a smaller number were supportive of the process. Many also offered more extended responses than on other topics and this helped to elaborate further their



Before turning to the detail of these discussions, a brief summary of the responses is outlined in the table below.

Table 4.7 Official Exclusion: notions of effectiveness

School	Name	Effective	Not Effective	Varies	Don't know	Other
School 1	A			✓		
	B		✓			
	C		✓			
School 2	D				✓	
	E			✓		
	F			✓		
	G		✓			
School 3	H					Not discussed
	I		✓			
	J		✓			
	K		✓			
School 4	L					Not discussed
	M	✓				
	N	✓				
	O		✓			
	P		✓			
	Q		✓			
	R			✓		
	S	✓				

Shaded areas denote high Excluding schools

Layer 1/Excluee = red

Layer 2/at risk of Exclusion = blue

Layer 3/more broadly excluded = green

The table shows that seven participants saw Exclusion as entirely ineffective. Three thought that it was an effective response to poor behaviour and four young people said that they thought that effectiveness varied according to individual circumstances surrounding an incident. Some analysis of the responses was attempted in terms of the matched pairs of schools with the aim of establishing whether pupils in different kinds of schools had different views on the effectiveness of Exclusion. However, the combination of the breadth of responses and the small numbers involved make it difficult to make any but the broadest of comment. That said, it is clear that pupils across different schools share many of the same views about the effectiveness of Exclusion. A clearer pattern emerges when looking at the responses in terms of the notion of 'layers of exclusion', with more consistent views about whether Exclusion 'works' or not expressed by those who had been Excluded once or more. As can be seen, five of the nine Excluees thought it entirely ineffective and another two felt that it worked only in specific situations. This point, articulated by those so directly affected, seems an important one



should consider seriously. At present, government and the local authorities accept that a level of official Exclusion is inevitable and there have been recent calls by teachers for more power to Exclude. These views about effectiveness offer some serious and timely comment on that.

However, this summary, while important, cannot fully reflect the quality and depth of the contributions to this part of the discussion. A number of commentators (Munn, Lloyd and Cullen 2000, Thomas 1998, Cooper and McIntyre 1996, Hamill and Boyd 2002) have noted the effects of a positive school ethos and a 'common sense of purpose' (Hewett, Epstein et al. 2000;6) on Exclusion rates. One young woman took up this theme with great clarity, having been a pupil in different schools

'I think it [Exclusion] might work here but I don't think it ever worked at [School X] ... at [School X] you were basically told you were on your own...'

She continued to explore her ideas with talk about possible external influences, saying,

'...At this school there's a lot of kids have stable family backgrounds and their mum and dad haven't split up and they've not grown up with the fact that in their way of life, fighting was the norm and being cheeky to people was the norm so that's what they did in school'

(E).

Others talked more in terms of deficits in parenting skills, saying, 'I saw someone come back and they behaved really badly. It made them worse. Probably they've got bad parents' (A). Such a view also reflects the findings of previous studies seeking parents' own views (MacBeath 1989) as well as being a common element of teacher discourse.

The idea that Exclusion was counter-productive was raised in a number of the discussions, with one young man remembering, 'It just made me mad!' (A) and another saying, 'It just makes you mare annoyed, ken, it disnae make you like them any better' (G), conveying both a sense of anger and also the significance placed on the breakdown in the personal relationship between school and pupil (John 1996). Another theme which ran through a number of the interviews was that of effectiveness bound up with fairness, with one participant saying, 'I don't think it helps at all' (C). He described how

initially he had seen the school's decision to Exclude him as the right decision but had later come to view it as unfair; 'All through school I've done nothing wrong but other people have done things.' (C). The Exclusees in this study also discriminated between times when they saw an Exclusion as fair and times when it was not, and, interestingly, it was also implied by one young man that Exclusion may become less effective the more frequently it is used:

'It depends on the things and on the person it is.  
[it works for] somebody who never really meant to do the thing they were  
suspended for. And they'll be more careful from then on. And for somebody  
who does it all the time it doesn't [work]'  
(F).

One young woman who had been Excluded herself more than once was adamant about its inappropriateness; 'A few days off isn't going to help you is it?' (P). Another participant, one who had not personally been Excluded, saw Exclusion as useful as it 'teaches them a lesson' (N). Others saw the issue in terms of the needs of the generality of pupils;

'To stop all the fighting and for the teachers getting hassled and all that. It helps the teachers. It helps pupils if the pupils want to work and they're sitting in class and other people are disturbing them'  
(S).

This latter view may lie closest to the circumstances set out in the Guidance document as necessary conditions for Exclusion. In marked contrast to their discussions of the processes of Exclusion, these young people, then, had some very clear and strongly expressed views about the aims and the effectiveness of Exclusion.

### *Event of Official Exclusion*

As talk moved on to discussion of the event of Exclusion the number of those able to make direct comment was reduced, although, in addition to the nine Exclusees, three young people who had not been Excluded themselves did contribute their views. The

most striking feature of the comments made here was that the Excluees seem to share only a very general, sometimes vague, understanding of the reasons given for their own Exclusion or Exclusions. Those (four) who had been Excluded more than once were not always sure how many times they had been out of school, and as noted earlier, in one case, there was some confusion about 'sending home', 'suspension' and Exclusion, which suggested that unofficial Exclusion was still occurring in one of the four schools. Some personal accounts of Exclusion talked about serious incidents such as a failure to follow safety rules during a fire drill, throwing furniture at school staff and physical assault of fellow pupils, and in each of these cases the young people felt that the school had been right to Exclude them, a number adding that their family also thought that they 'deserved it'. Most of the young people said that they felt supported by their family in dealing with the consequences of Exclusion and with attendance at meetings to discuss re-admission to school. There were also accounts of punishments such as grounding or being confined to a bedroom for an indefinite period as a result of an official Exclusion. While the young people also saw these as just, some of these responses often seemed to the researcher to be overly severe.

There were other occasions where some young people felt that the decision had not been appropriate, and again the influence of a negative reputation on a decision to Exclude was emphasised. Having described an earlier Exclusion which he felt was justified, one participant went on to talk about an incident in a way which illustrates how easily an incident can escalate, and how reputation may play its part in this.

'I'd done a punishment exercise and I'd handed it into her and the next day she goes, "Where's that punishment exercise?" and I says, 'I gave it to you'. And I really did do it. And she just kept saying to me I was wrong and I got hefty annoyed then. And she just handed me another one and I said something rude, said, 'shove it up your...'. Know what I mean? I dinnae think I should have been Excluded. That was a bit out of the blue. They could have just tooken me out of that class and never let me in again'

(G).

## *Gender and Official Exclusion*

While many of the experiences of Exclusion did seem to have much in common with each other there was also an interest in Exclusion as a gendered experience. As discussed earlier, research has highlighted the disproportionately high number of male Exclusees and these interviews gave an opportunity to explore this more closely. As noted earlier, of the 17 interview participants, ten were male and seven were female. In the group of ten young men interviewed individually, there were six Exclusees, three of whom had been Excluded more than once. They described a range of views and experiences, and many of these mirrored findings in previous research about, for example, common reasons for Exclusion and feelings about fairness. Among the seven young women met with individually, there were three Exclusees, one of whom had been Excluded more than once. The research design had sought an equal number of young women and men for interview for reasons outlined earlier, but schools invariably found it easier to identify potential male pupils for inclusion in the study, resulting in this final total.

The three young women who had direct experience of official Exclusion talked about the events surrounding it in some detail. One young woman talked about being Excluded from school for 'being in the wrong place at the wrong time' (Q). She had agreed to carry an air rifle in her school bag for a male friend who had been firing it in the local shopping centre. Another had been Excluded for fighting with a girl who made fun of her shortly after her father's death. Both of these were pupils in a high Excluding school and both described these experiences as their 'worst times' in school and both spoke elsewhere of how much they valued various aspects of their school experience.

The third young woman, also a pupil in a high Excluding school recounted her story about an organised outside visit and how 'there was just two lassies, me and my pal and the rest were laddies...there were seven of us and then we got in a fight and we got in trouble' (P). Like one of the other young women, her involvement in violence seemed to be associated with relationships with male peers, but, as noted previously, in other ways she talked very differently about school and her outside activities and interests. Although in a minority, her responses are notable, interesting in themselves, and marked her out as



a powerful and intelligent young woman, who nevertheless seemed to reject both school and the traditional feminine roles assigned her.

She was belligerent about her support of physical fighting, illegal drug use, car theft and her gang or 'posse', who were all male apart from her. Research (Chaplain 1996) has highlighted the risks working class young men may be taking when they make investment in educational achievement. It seemed that this young woman mimicked so many behaviours and attitudes of her more disaffected male peers that it also became dangerous for her to value school achievement of any kind. Although this may be an extreme example, her responses point to the need to see the risk-taking and 'self-worth protection' described by Chaplain as having implications for both young men and also for young women, perhaps more so in school communities with traditionally lower educational achievement levels. Although the other two young women were much less extreme, the discovery of female involvement in such behaviour was surprising and might suggest the need for an increased awareness (Campbell 1991, Chesney-Lind 1997, Underwood 2003) of a tendency among young women in schools to adopt stereotypical, aggressive behaviour, seeking the very reputation which is sometimes described by the young men in the study as a burden.

### Alternatives to Exclusion

Like the young man who suggested earlier that 'they could have just taken me out of that class...', (G) nearly all of the young people made suggestions of alternatives to Exclusion. Although most young people noted only one or two suggestions each of an alternative there was a large range overall. All but two of these seemed intended to be supportive rather than punitive and included, for example, suggestions such as seeking advice from the school's pupil support teacher or from a guidance teacher, support from the educational psychologist, the setting of personal targets and challenges with agreed rewards, phoning Childline, individual counselling, and anger management. Only one young person referred to social work involvement, and while this may sadly reflect the current reduced provision of social work in schools, it may also be that some young

people with social work involvement may feel uncomfortable talking about this. Underlying most of the suggested alternatives there was a belief in the usefulness of talking and listening, of personal contact and a supportive relationship with adults, for example, 'talk to us a wee bit. Give us time to cool down. Like now, I'm getting the thing for my anger. They try to help people with problems, eh?' (R).

Three young people said that the school did try to help when problems arose but suggested that this was not successful; ('teachers try to help' (D)), and two others talked about alternative punishments such as detention, which they strongly disliked. There were no major differences in the number of suggestions made by young people in the different schools overall, but there was a much greater knowledge of the breadth of support available within the school and from external agencies in both of the high Excluding schools. This difference is perhaps one to be expected but not necessarily helpful to young people looking for support in the low Excluding schools.

It is also interesting that no young person referred to the Pupil Support Group (PSG) at any point in any interview either directly or indirectly. This is an inter-professional group operating in each school in the area, and one of the main planks of local authority strategic support for vulnerable young people. A number of the alternatives to Exclusion and supports for broader needs, suggested by the young people here, are accessed through the PSG but their apparent distance from its discussions raises important questions about self-efficacy and the general involvement of young people in decision-making about their own lives. Young people are still only exceptionally involved in PSG meetings and perhaps if their presence is seen as impractical then the process itself is in need of review

### Hidden Exclusion

The other major area of discussion with young people centred on what is called here 'hidden exclusion'. Booth (1996) argues that 'Exclusion affects all pupils who are devalued by, and in, mainstream school' (1996;35). Osler et al. suggest in their study of exclusion and girls, 'Exclusion can be the result of disciplinary procedures, but it can also

occur through feelings of isolation, disaffection, unresolved personal, family or emotional problems, bullying, withdrawal or truancy' (2002;3). The term 'hidden exclusion' is consciously intended to be broad, encompassing a range of issues. Its investigation, however, is in some ways much more problematic than official Exclusion because, as noted previously, hidden exclusion lacks the sharp definitions and boundaries of meaning associated with official Exclusion for indiscipline. It has been less widely researched, particularly among young women, and those who have ventured to explore it have often had to define their own terms (Osler et al.2002, Booth 1996, Cullingford and Morrison 1996, Gordon 2001). To some extent this is also the case for this study. The notion of 'layers of exclusion' has been developed in part to frame the notion that beyond those pupils who are officially Excluded there are others, a second layer; those who experience some forms of internal exclusion because they are troublesome in school but not (yet?) Excluded, and beyond that, yet other pupils; a third layer, much less visible to policy-makers and less widely researched, but who are excluded or marginalised perhaps in equally significant ways. The findings from the interviews support the legitimacy of concern about this group. Within the context of exclusion and aware of concerns about social inclusion, there is a need to recognise and explore the experiences of those young people who are marginalised and indeed very challenging to schools, though not perhaps always in the most commonly used sense of the word. With this recognition and exploration it is hoped to begin to bridge the gap between different understandings of exclusion and to add to the debate about what is meant by the terms 'exclusion from school' and 'social exclusion'.

The following areas of interest emerged from discussions about hidden exclusion; some stimulated by the research questions but also some from the young people themselves. The questions covered three main areas. All the young people were asked for their general comments on non-attendance, though many chose to respond in personal terms, on certain aspects of the issue. They were also asked about 'people who bottle up their problems' and school responses to this. Finally they were asked about ways in which their internal school support and discipline systems worked to avoid the use of official Exclusion, and how effective they saw these systems to be.

## *Attendance*

One of the most immediate findings was that the categories of official Exclusion and 'hidden' exclusion are not mutually exclusive, and that for some young people, they overlap considerably. Attendance, for example, emerged as an issue for seven of the 17 young people interviewed; five of the seven young women and two of the ten young men, across all four schools. In preparatory discussions with school staff, non-attendance was suggested as one of the criteria only for those in 'layer 3', yet these seven included three official Excluees, as well as four excluded in a broader sense. Of these, two talked about period absence only, four talked about taking full days off only and one talked about being involved in both. Most of the participants seemed comfortable talking about the absences; where they went and with whom, and which classes they had missed and how often; for example, '...just sat in the toilets...then go to the next class' (B).

Although the numbers are too small to permit any generalisation it is interesting that so many of the young women here saw attendance as an issue for themselves. It is interesting that one of the young men also commented that 'girls skive more' (A). As discussed earlier, national statistics on attendance are not presently gathered in such a way as to permit a detailed analysis based on gender. However, if this finding were to be confirmed by further research, it would present schools with an urgent set of questions about the over-representation of male pupils in official Exclusion figures. Lower female attendance may not be seen as a problem because it is associated with home and caring responsibilities. Perhaps it is not seen as a problem because of girls' 'greater adaptability to the academic routines of school' (Osler et al. 2002;54) and perhaps their greater understanding of how to work the attendance monitoring systems to their own ends.

It was found that young people were, perhaps understandably, more reticent about the reasons which lay behind their personal experience of non-attendance. It seemed easier for the participants to talk about why pupils in general might have difficulties with attendance and when talking about what they might regard as acceptable reasons for non-attendance, the most commonly reported reason was 'bullying'. This was mentioned by



eight of the participants, across all four schools and by both young women and men, and offers an interesting parallel with suggestions made about acceptable reasons for official Exclusion. The issue of verbal and physical abuse by peers has been noted in a number of other studies of hidden exclusion (Osler et al. 2002, Crozier and Antiss 1995, Edward and Malcolm 2002, Booth 1996, and recently in the Scottish press, and challenges the earlier views set out by Lamb (2000) and Stoll and O'Keeffe among others that non-attendance is largely a result of a 'rejection of the curriculum' (1988;26). It is interesting that young people here suggested bullying was a reasonable reason for absence from school and this, taken together with comments such as, 'teachers try to help' (D), suggest that schools are still less than effective in tackling such behaviour, unless it becomes openly confrontational and physical; an approach still less common among young women in school.

Other 'reasonable' reasons for non-attendance, each noted by one young person only, included pregnancy, bereavement, the difficulty of the work, hating school and wanting to spend time with friends and 'things they can't actually put a name to, but they know it's there' (E). This last may perhaps have been a reference to mental health issues. Family issues, mentioned by three young people, interestingly all female, may also relate to this, with one participant suggesting that, 'part of their family could be really ill or they could be scared to come in to school in case other people know about it' (Q). This may suggest that the right to privacy is problematic for young people in schools and also, perhaps, that there are some illnesses which are felt to be more 'private' than others.

Talking through views of attendance monitoring, it was clear those who had never taken time off school without permission thought that the system worked well, but that some participants who had taken time off unofficially felt that the system was ineffective in ensuring they attended school. As one young woman commented,

'I took three weeks off cos I was skiving! And the school didn't do nothing about it. [They phone home] and that's it! And you're not exactly going to answer it, are you? So there's no point in phoning' (P).

For Stoll and O’Keeffe this ineffectiveness occurs because we live in ‘a society where school is compulsory but the mechanisms for compliance are weak’ (1988;26). This explanation, though popular, seems simplistic. While recognising the inherent tensions in the compulsory nature of schooling, it cannot adequately explain the steady increase in non-attendance, or why the steady increase in recent years in more punitive formal and legal responses has failed to improve the situation greatly. Furlong suggests that ‘Educational structures - the power of education - is used not just to impose certain sorts of behaviour, but to construct young people in particular ways’ (1991;298 original emphasis) and perhaps the kind of comment above from a young person reflects a resistance to that moulding or construction. However, the diversity of discussion with the participants here suggests that it is perhaps still inadequate to see all non-attendance as resistance (Carlen *et al.*1992).

The issue of what is often called ‘collusion by home’ seems to highlight this. One young man spoke with delight about a short doctor’s appointment which had given him an excuse for a whole day off school and which his mother had condoned, but another participant talked about things ‘bugging’ her at home and which were ‘starting to spill out’ in school, leading to absence condoned by home (E). Another talked about her friend’s regular late-coming to school and the home responsibilities which necessitated this. The term ‘collusion’, like ‘truancy’ seems to imply a sense of personal blame, a sense of pre-meditation and of straightforward choice on the part of the young person. However, the examples and reasons given by these young people were found to be much too varied for such a term to be appropriate. While recognising the importance of Malcolm, Thorpe and Lowden’s (1996) finding that pupil performance was equally affected whatever the reason for absence, these findings reinforce again the importance of recognising the impact of social context and that these ‘geographies of failure’ (Smyth and Hattam 2001) are complex and inter-related. The same may also be true of another even more problematic area of hidden exclusion. Stirling (1992) talks about ‘unofficial exclusions’ where authorised absences can be used ‘imaginatively’ (1992;128), and at least two young people in this study reported using medical absence in this way.

## Other Forms of Hidden Exclusion

There was also some evidence of young people being excluded in other ways while still remaining on the roll of their mainstream schools. Fifteen of the participants were in S3 and S4 and so had begun preparing for external national examinations. A high number, nine of these 15, were following an individualised timetable which involved fewer Standard Grades or a reduced timetable. This finding raises a fundamental question explored earlier about the currency of the term 'exclusion' and the assumption that some young people, when understood as 'excluded' are necessarily and always losing something or excluded from something that is desirable. While recognising that exclusion may close off doors to opportunity later in life, it seemed that some young people felt that some, though not all of the teachers responsible for these individualised timetables were also making genuine and imaginative attempts to work to their strengths, to 'keep doors open' and maximise potential in difficult circumstances.

This question of definition is made more complex because individual arrangements or an alternative curriculum may be perceived as either punitive and supportive, depending on those involved and their viewpoints. Two young people talked of having been 'moved down', which for them, resulted in being removed from presentation lists for Standard Grade specifically because of absence or behaviour issues. Both were disappointed though resigned to the decision and seemingly supportive of the teachers who had made the decision. In one case it was the young person's favourite subject. For others, the decision to reduce the number of Standard Grades was seen very positively; 'Supported Studies is quite good. That's where I do my homework. Instead of another Standard Grade you get that to help you' (A).

Three of the schools in the study had some kind of additional behaviour support space and used the term 'base', although the provision had developed quite differently in each school. None of the young people equated support with a physical 'base' in the way that teachers in these schools did, but four were openly enthusiastic about the smaller classes and the individual support with schoolwork offered as part of a reduced or alternative

timetable, a finding echoed in a study by Hamill and Boyd (2002). Although views on support offered in this way were largely positive, then, it is important to note that this was not unanimous. One participant described how 'He's just shoved me in the support base for the past two days and I'm not even doing any work there...sitting in there...staring at the wall' (G). The disparity in these findings again highlights the importance of seeking directly the views of young people themselves, particularly in the case of individualised arrangements.

Stirling (1992) and Cullingford and Morrison (1996) discuss other kinds of unofficial exclusion including so called 'voluntary' exclusion, but no evidence of, for example, young people being told to stay at home was found except for the young man who said he had never been Excluded but then went on to talk about his experience of being 'suspended'. This is the term which most young people in these schools used among themselves for official Exclusion. He was, however, quite definite that it had been unofficial, that he had been sent home 'two or three times' (F) and that there had been no official letter accompanying this action. A check of school records confirmed that he had never been officially Excluded. Although it is clearly disappointing to find that this practice still exists, it was only reported in one school, and by only one participant.

Hidden exclusion overall, then, took many forms and is understood as an area in which it is important to avoid simple generalisations. The individualised nature of some provision, for example, referral to a support base, is shown to be a strength when the young people can identify the aims clearly for themselves and feel supported by the school in achieving those aims. However, the same strategy may lead to further marginalisation and distress, as with the young man 'shoved' in the school support base, where there is a lack of planning and support.



## Documentary Analysis

It was hoped that further exploration of internal discipline procedures in each school and links to internal support systems would assist in understanding examples and experiences of hidden exclusion. Attempts were therefore made to gather relevant data in each school. This proved to be a very time-consuming and difficult undertaking, as others have also found (Hewitt *et al.* 2001). The concerns about micro-control through recording of information were borne out by discovery of some extensive files on individual pupils, kept by different adults in schools and in different places within these schools. It seems that the pressure to produce ever-increasing amounts of information for national and local government has compromised the search for an effective method for recording, monitoring and evaluation of internal discipline and support, but still influenced the amount of data seen as important. Although it is to be expected that each school has its own character and culture, the relevant systems often appeared to have evolved idiosyncratically over time and without the necessary checks. It had been hoped, for example, that examination of referrals to the four Pupil Support Groups would provide a point of reference and comparison for those young people who were at risk of Exclusion.

It would have been particularly useful to learn more of the patterns of support available to those at risk of Exclusion and to see whether and which supports were most useful, not only for those interviewed but more widely. One school was not willing to allow access to these internal records. In the other three schools it seemed that this process differed substantially, despite the existence of specific local authority guidelines. It had been expected that the schools would share similar approaches to the identification of vulnerable pupils at risk of exclusion in some sense, and that the overall number of young people referred to the PSGs would be higher than the number of pupils Excluded in each school. This was not found to be the case and indeed in one school (1), in direct contravention of local authority guidelines, it was clear that pupils were usually referred to the PSG only after an Exclusion had taken place. In another school (3) the number of Exclusees was found to be higher than the number of new referrals in each academic session studied. With these kinds of issues, and the discovery that referrals did not

always make clear the reasons for an individual referral, and that information where available was not always consistent with teachers' or pupils' own accounts, it was unfortunately very difficult to make any useful comparisons between schools on areas which would have been highly relevant to this study. Hidden exclusion, then, remains an extremely difficult area to define, in which to gather evidence, and therefore difficult to challenge, although it is clearly a feature of experience for many of those interviewed, both those seen as disruptive and those seen as less challenging.

## Summary

The aim of these individual interviews was to explore with young people who had been excluded in some sense their experience of this and how this related to other experiences of school; to ask them to consider their own personal experiences but also to ask what they understood of others' lives in times of difficulty. The interviews were intended to allow young people a time to reflect about issues which often affected them directly and a space where they were perhaps more free than usual to reflect at length and without the burden of peer expectations. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the interviews provided a rich and fruitful way to gather such information, and one which seemed to be enjoyed by many of the participants.

Mirroring findings of previous research, many of those interviewed remembered their primary schools with affection and spoke of enjoying their time there. It was interesting, however, that five young people said that they were happier in secondary school and that these were all pupils in high Excluding schools, though not all Excludees. In keeping with previous studies too, discussion of work and of adult relationships revealed that, despite often poor self-esteem, nearly all the participants valued academic work and achievement and valued teachers who were supportive of their academic work. Outside of school, young people were engaged in a range of typical teenage activities, with only a small number involved in offending behaviour. They were, thus, found to have much more in common with their peers than is often acknowledged. This information is

relevant because it suggests that, despite problems with attendance or with behaviour, young people in these situations are not as disaffected as expected. It may explain why some have not been Excluded officially more often. It may explain why some maintain an erratic attendance rather than depart altogether. There were suggestions that schools efforts to assist in times of crisis are appreciated, even if not always successful.

Additionally, it was clear that disruptive behaviour was recognised by nearly all participants as having an effect on their ability to concentrate on classroom tasks. Such disruption was not always seen as unwelcome, however, and depended on other factors. It was also found, interestingly, that ambivalent attitudes to this issue were not confined to those who were disruptive themselves.

The interviews also revealed that these young people had much more in common with each other than expected, and more than schools might assume from their behaviour. It became apparent that many of the known characteristics and life experiences of Excluees were shared by all the participants. It is known that official Exclusion from school increases the risk of wider social exclusion in adulthood and therefore, this finding highlights a concern both about the present situations of many of these young people and about their futures.

With regard to official Exclusion, there was surprisingly strong coherence found in the experiences and views of officially Excluded young people in different schools and those in high and low Excluding schools, and strongly held views about the aims and effectiveness of this process.

Similarly, and counter to expectation, there was little difference found in each school among those who experienced more hidden forms of exclusion, except, significantly, to confirm that they did indeed experience various forms of marginalisation and that these were often more problematic and difficult to explore than official Exclusion. With regard to issues of gender, a number of interesting questions were raised about an apparent gap between how young women in school define themselves and their experiences, and how schools view them.

In summary, then, these interviews and their explorations confirm that there are continuing grounds for concern for these young people, but also that there are grounds for hope. As can be seen from the wide range of their contributions, their unique viewpoints ensure that they have much to offer the debates about exclusion, and much of what they say is clearly relevant to the direction of future policies and practice, for example with regard to systems of discipline or attendance or support in times of difficulty, both in their own schools and beyond.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Findings: The Experiences of the Generality of Pupils**

#### **Introduction**

At the same time as individual interviews were being undertaken, four focus groups were formed, one in each participating school. Each group comprised between nine and fourteen young people, male and female, aged 13-15 years old. By selecting young people of similar age and stage to the excluded pupils, it was hoped that some comparisons could usefully be made. It is known that this age group is the most likely to have attendance difficulties and also become officially Excluded from school. It seemed likely then that the disruption associated with this would be felt most severely at this stage.

#### **Research Questions for the Generality of Pupils**

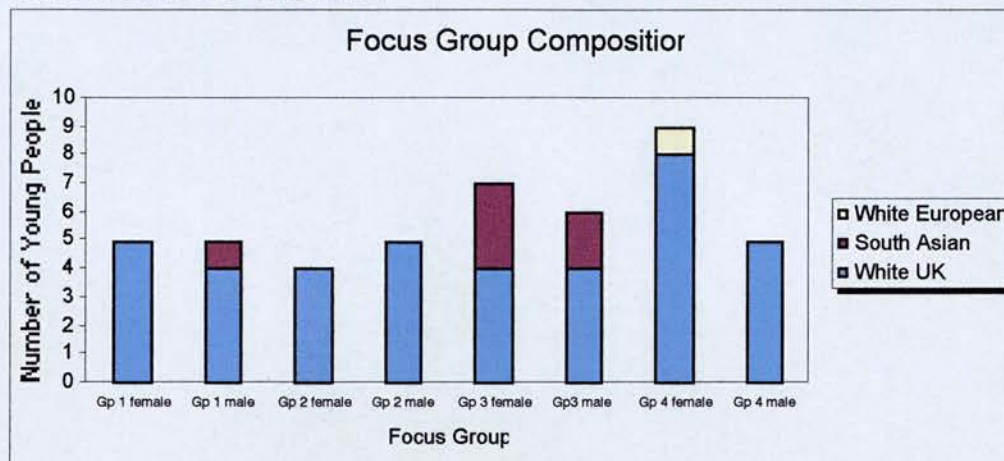
The questions guiding the data collection with the generality of pupils focussed on similar themes to those explored with the excluded pupils. These questions are outlined below.

1. How does the general school population experience disruptive behaviour in school, in terms of their learning and social relationships?
2. How do they experience and understand official Exclusion?

- 3 Does the generality of pupils understand there to be different ways in which their peers can be excluded from school, and if so, how are these different ways defined and characterised?

## The Focus Group Process

*Fig 5.1 Focus Group composition*



The sessions ranged from one to three hours in total, with up to three separate meetings. Previous research with young people has often highlighted their lack of extended responses and the approaches to data collection in this study seek to acknowledge the lack of practice and confidence that many young people have in talking at length about sensitive issues. Questions about disruption, about Exclusion and wider meanings of exclusion were always embedded in a range of questions so that the relative importance of these issues to the young people could be explored as part of the larger research questions.

It is recognised that there may be differences in the depth of contributions offered in those schools where more sessions took place but this was unfortunately due to individual school circumstances. These groups were larger than originally planned, but agreeing to take a class group made access arrangements much more straightforward. The groups

undertook the series of tasks described earlier: Concentric Conversations, Disruption Cards and an individual Behaviour Questionnaire. These activities aimed to promote discussion and gather views and feelings about the possible effects of disruptive behaviour in secondary school. The different instruments were designed to encompass a range of individual, paired and whole group responses and devised in such a way that the emphasis was on discussion and brief written responses rather than extended writing. The order of completion of tasks varied from group to group and it is recognised that this may also have had an impact on the responses, and the degree of focus on certain questions. However, no group began with the Behaviour Questionnaire in which each person was asked to reflect individually on their own disruptive behaviour and feelings about disruption in general.

*Table 5.2 Data collection instrumentation*

Trigger activity	School 1 N= 10	School 2 N= 9	School 3 N= 13	School 4 N= 14	Total Participants N = 46
Behaviour Questionnaire	✓	✓	✓	✓	46 (in 2 high Excluding and 2 low Excluding schools)
Concentric Conversations	✓	✓		✓	33 (in 2 high Excluding and 1 low Excluding schools)
Disruption Cards	✓	✓		✓	33 (in 2 high Excluding and 1 low Excluding schools)
Number of sessions	2	2	1	3	

## Context of Analysis

### Consent

Issues of consent seemed to differ between the schools. Both high Excluding schools agreed that letters seeking consent for participation in the focus group could be sent on an opt-out basis. They seemed to be reassured by the fact that letters were sent separately to the pupils and to their parent or carer. One low Excluding school was also content with

this arrangement but the other insisted on each focus group participant bringing written confirmation of willingness to participate. Although the thesis often emphasises the need to take issues of consent seriously, the reason for requesting opt-out consent was a concern to include hard-to-reach young people, who might be less likely to read and respond to such letters. The implications of differing decisions made by school are discussed in detail below.

By the end of the focus group session in School 3, it was clear that two sessions with each group would be of benefit and the three remaining schools accepted this change. In these schools therefore, at the end of the first session, regardless of whether they had 'opted in' or 'not opted out', participants were asked to indicate their individual willingness to meet for a second session. In Group 1, one young man, who had contributed articulately but with a non-mainstream set of views, let me know via this method that he would prefer to opt-out of the second session. I was disappointed to lose his contribution, but glad that he felt able to express his feelings on the matter. Similarly, when I arrived for the second session, one very quiet young woman asked her teacher if she could withdraw. At the same time, another young woman asked to be able to join this focus group, despite her parent's written refusal for involvement. This represented the only such refusal in the study. This seemingly confident and articulate young woman appeared very anxious not to be left behind without her friends and pleaded, despite clear embarrassment, to be allowed to come. She finally saved face by accepting that as a researcher in school, I would 'get into trouble' if she came. Her agitation and anxiety seemed all the more poignant in a young woman who presented as very self-assured and articulate in other ways. It suggests that, for all three of these individuals, and perhaps then also for the group members in general, the social interaction associated with this group was more of an issue or at least as important as the topic under discussion. It is important to be aware of this in terms of its impact on the generative and reflexive interaction within the group responses. It acts as reminders of the ways in which social interaction, the need to assert identities, to maintain and repair relationships help to shape the contributions all individuals make, perhaps especially when talking about such a sensitive issue.



In School 2, where the management had rejected the notion of opt-out consent, the issues which emerged suggested links with wider aspects of school life and relationships. At the first group session in the school, the class group drifted in and three pupils laid 'behaviour sheets' on the teacher's desk. When the teacher arrived, she checked the class register against the list of pupils who had returned their consent slips and these same three were then told they would have to leave the room as no permission slips had been returned. One lad protested vehemently that he had handed in his slip and muttered 'That's crap' loudly under his breath. This led to a very public reminder by the teacher that he was 'on a final warning' and 'one more step out of line and you know you'll be out of here tonight'. There was a sense of frustration on my part as they were marched from the room. As previously described, I had been keen to use opt-out consents with all the focus groups because it seemed the best way to ensure access to more difficult-to-reach young people. As these young people departed, taking their behaviour sheets with them, I could only speculate about the difference their contributions might have made to this focus group.

It is interesting that issues of consent were raised directly only by young people in the two low Excluding schools; those with predominantly middle-class pupil catchments, and where senior management had also raised concern about parental sensitivities in terms of consent. This raised a question about the lack of such sensitivity or sense of threat experienced by high Excluding schools in this respect. Conversation with teachers and other professionals associated with these latter schools revealed an ongoing difficulty in ensuring responses from home in all school matters and also a less onerous questioning of school policy and practice. Although not a direct concern of this research, this context of what may be understood as differing power differentials between home and school raises a further question about how this may shape understandings of individual agency for pupils in the different schools.

Research on the usefulness of focus groups has often tended to emphasise, quite legitimately, as one of its major strengths the opportunity to explore group attitudes and

beliefs and consensus (Lewis 1992, Wilson 1997, Armstrong *et al.* 2000, Frankland and Bloor 1999) but these small encounters act as a reminder that this can be a 'double-edged sword', with one of the quietest participants and one of the most independent participants opting out, and one of the most seemingly self-confident very keen to opt-in so as not to be left out socially. This is an important factor to consider when evaluating the aims and effectiveness of the focus group approach in this study, both in thinking about how closely these focus groups reflect a generality, and in terms of the quality of the data as group data set alongside that from the individual interviews.

Consent among the young people in the two high Excluding groups did not seem to be an issue in the same way and its absence makes it all the more difficult to assess any possible impact. It is worth considering whether this may be construed as acquiescence or subservience in schools with much higher proportions of pupils from families with low socio-economic status; evidence of the 'deep structure and grammar of class inequality and domination' (Furlong 1985;158) discussed earlier.

However, groups in these schools tended to be much more openly challenging; both in the school where I was well known and where I was unknown to the pupils. In the latter group the amount of informal social discussion was great and direction was needed to bring the group together to focus on the research, but equally the attempts to interact with and interrogate me as the researcher were also greater. There were, for example, questions asking where I was from and whether I had had teachers I disliked at school. There were also questions specific to the research, questioning how a particular question was relevant to the topic of exclusion. In considering this question of consent, then, it seems that it may also illuminate the complexities of pupil agency.

## Location

All the focus groups met in school classrooms, and the field notes reflect an awareness that interactions and responses in the initial stages of each meeting were influenced by an expectation of certain behaviours of young people as 'pupils': that in school, young

people behave in a certain way; that they are flippant and reluctant to engage, that they object to any suggestion made by an adult, and so on. These expectations included expectations of the adult role and in the more challenging groups there was some checking of boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Green and Hart (1999) in their study of a wide range of formal and informal contexts in focus groups note that, 'In schools, facilitators were clearly situated as "honorary teachers" (being in some cases addressed as "Miss"), whose role was clearly to "manage" the discussion, and children were adept at persuading each other to treat them in that way' (1999;29).

My past professional experience, both as a groupworker in informal settings and as a teacher in a mainstream secondary school, had offered some forewarning of this. One of the most obvious markers of pupil/teacher relations, as opposed to many other adult/young person relationships in Western culture today, is the rigidly enforced rule about forms of address. Therefore, one of the most straightforward ways to counter the constraints of the classroom and to convey the notion that a different, more informal relationship was possible in the research, was to emphasise the use of first name terms. Name labels were worn by all including the researcher. The data collection instruments included an element of physical activity and offered numerous changes of pace, based on activities recognisable to any groupworker. This informality was balanced by an acknowledgement and utilisation of some other aspects of the role of the teacher and the school setting, so that the content and control of the activities themselves were highly structured and initiated and led by me. It is not possible to know how differently these young people might have behaved if they had met, for example, in a community lounge or school cafe. However, there were plainly advantages to all the groups meeting in the same sort of arena, as it offered a base line for comparison.

### Prior Group Experience

The other major factor affecting both the process and the findings for all groups was the fact that these were pre-existing groups. All of the young people were accustomed to meet weekly in these groups in these same classrooms when timetabled for Social

Education. It was fortunate for the research that there were no changes of venue during the course of the group meetings.

There has been much discussion about the use of pre-existing groups for focus groups (Borland *et al.* 2001, Oates 2000, Wilson 1997) and Kitzinger (1994) talks about the strength of this approach as offering groups 'within which [people] actually operate... allowing us to tap into fragments of interactions which approximate[d] to naturally occurring data' (1994;105). To some extent this is the case for these groups but despite the attempts by teachers to provide a 'settled' group, a class group remains an artificial construct. Kitzinger equates 'pre-existing' with 'self-selecting' but it is important to note that is not the case for a class group. However, within the school classes that formed each of these focus groups, participants were encouraged to sit where and with whom they felt comfortable, to ensure that responses were as relaxed as possible. It seemed that enough of the elements of friendship groups were there for all the groups to be able to articulate their experiences in a positive climate. Again, it is not possible to know how the challenges, the humour, or the degree of consensus might have differed if this research had used friendship groups instead of class groups but certainly there were challenges, there was shared humour; there were 'differences of opinion' and there were 'compromises' (Thacker 1990;71).

### A Generality of Pupils?

Within this discussion of the context of the focus group meetings, however, there were some interesting insights into the schools' interpretations of the meaning of 'generality of pupils'. Two of the groups (Groups 1 and 3) included a male pupil who had been temporarily Excluded on one occasion in the past. In Group 2 there were no pupils with current discipline issues (as noted earlier, they had been removed because they had not returned their consent forms) but at least one described herself as having an attendance difficulty. In Group 4, one young man was on a 'behaviour sheet' although he was only present for the first session. There was also a young woman in this group with some learning difficulties. Because of the disparity in access to personal pupil information in



different schools, there may have been other difficulties not known to the researcher. However, for the purposes of the research it is possible to claim that overall the focus groups comprised a 'generality' which included a majority of young people with no obvious additional needs, and a small minority of pupils with additional difficulties of some kind.

Most of the teachers who assisted in setting up the focus groups were quite open in their attempts to offer a group that was 'settled'. A class that is settled is taken to mean one that is without any major internal conflict, perhaps with fewer antagonisms and marginalized members, and which is seen as adequately open and confident with strangers; all common indicators of a group with internal cohesion and strong bonds. It may be argued that these groups cannot then be said to be necessarily typical of a generality of pupils. However, as noted earlier, these four schools were chosen because, despite their differences, they were all known to have a positive ethos and a history of good practice with regard to Exclusion. It may be further argued that the groups cannot be said to be representative because not all young people contribute equally. While this argument is most often used in asserting the difficulties of evaluating group data, it is equally true of the individual interview situation. Not all interviewees are able to use the interview situation to best advantage although this method of data collection is widely respected. Therefore, while accepting that unequal contribution or participation is a feature of any group, this challenge was anticipated as far as possible by the design of the instrumentation described earlier and the emphasis on varying the context of question exploration across the range, from individual to paired response to whole group discussion, and from individual oral responses to larger group written responses and individual written response.

In retrospect, and despite the likely difficulties, the use of single sex groups might have been very productive. Part of the earlier discussion in respect of the current literature on exclusion highlighted a concern that public, academic and policy interest still tends to see exclusion as a problem encountered by boys and young men in conflict with school authority. Single sex groups might have offered a forum for different kinds of

explorations of the process of official Exclusion as well as of other experiences of marginalisation, for example, with regard to the role of young women as young carers.

Likewise, it is possible that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds might have been more usefully consulted in separate groups. Armstrong, Hill and Secker note the danger of their numbers being 'so small that their experiences would simply be absorbed into generalisations which might or might not be applicable' (2000;63) and refer to Gambe *et al.* (1992;22) who describe this succinctly as the 'universalizing of white experience'. These reservations may be set alongside what were found to be the very time-consuming practicalities of seeking access and consent to a relatively straightforward sample of the 'generality' of young people in the study schools. However, it is intended that the issues underlying these reservations may at least guide the analysis and help to avoid some of the more obvious pitfalls of generalisation.

## **Method of Analysis**

Although there is a growing and helpful literature on 'how to do' focus groups, there is still relatively little discussion and advice to assist the novice in analysis of focus group data. For some writers, it seems that there is an assumption that the process is fundamentally the same as for any other kind of qualitative data (Armstrong *et al.* 2000, Oates 2000, Boyle *et al.* 1989) but, paradoxically, there also seems to be a widespread reluctance to accept the findings of that process as equally valid, with some commentators noting that it has been perceived as better suited to an ancillary, supportive role in qualitative research (Lewis 1992, Kitzinger 1994). In this study, the high level of engagement by the young people and the quality of the data collected have ensured that the findings of the focus group are regarded as equally important and offering much that is useful to the discussion of exclusion.

Many studies assume that tape recording of focus groups is essential, but few discuss the practical difficulties of making this worthwhile. I had considered transcribing the focus

group sessions and this was attempted twice but subsequently abandoned. Success was very limited for a number of reasons. Classrooms are noisy, echoing places and only one of the rooms used had carpeting. The task-based activities often involved physical activity, adding to the general noise level, and the groups within groups were fluid, reconstituting for each new activity. By chance, I tried recording with one of the calmest groups and even in this situation it was impossible to distinguish speech and speaker with confidence. Perhaps with better quality equipment it would have been more successful although Green and Hart (1999) note this problem with taping and transcribing as a general difficulty with relatively large groups. Although disappointing at the time, the combination of fieldnotes (which noted the most striking non-verbal communication as well as some of the verbal interactions and responses) with the many and varied written contributions of the group members, provided much rich and interesting data.

The method of analysis borrowed from approaches outlined by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) and Miles and Huberman (1994) and also took account of Kitzinger's concern for 'collective reaction' (1994;110). Focus group research has been criticised for its lack of rigour and Stewart and Shamdasani note that 'A great deal of the scepticism about the value of focus groups probably arises from the perception that focus group data are subjective and difficult to interpret' (1990;102). I would argue that there are difficulties in analysing the data, and that perhaps it is naïve to suggest that we can simply replicate methods used elsewhere in qualitative research. There is a multi-dimensionality about the data, covering content and process, group and individual, that demands an overt, conscious inter-weaving of different approaches at different levels.

The analysis of Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards, both of which asked open questions, used some of the same basic techniques used for the interviews; 'cut and paste', some basic indexing with elements of content analysis. However, driving the overall shape of these analyses was also a concern raised by Kitzinger in her review of over forty focus group studies, and lies in her discovery of 'not a single one concentrating on the conversation between participants and very few that even included any quotations from more than one participant at a time' (1994;104). The omission of group interaction

data seems strange in view of the contribution such a situation and such data can make to understanding how young people talk about their opinions and develop ideas and views in communication with others. Therefore in this study, despite the practical difficulties, where an exchange or a shared joke, Kitzinger's 'collective remembering' (1994;105) or indeed marginal view and group response was particularly strongly voiced, attempts were made to code these into a thematic conceptual matrix (Miles and Huberman 1994;130-134). The earlier reference, for example, to the young man with non-mainstream views who opted out of a second focus group session was originally noted as a part of a comment on the group dynamics. Within the conceptual matrix then, space was made for group interactions as well as comment on initial tests of relationships between different questions and comparisons in and between groups. Similarly, attention is paid to the flow of group contributions in the Disruption Cards exercise illustrated earlier in Table 5.2. Alongside this, attempts were also made to use respondent validation to shape emerging analysis. Three of the four groups had more than one session and were offered feedback of initial data analysis for comment at the second session. Groups responded very positively to this. In addition, a small separate group of volunteer senior pupils, aged 16 and 17 years old, in one of the study schools, was brought together for a single session to discuss the tasks undertaken by the focus groups. They were able to offer some useful suggestions about the presentation and accessibility of instruments of data collection as well as comment on some of the early findings from the groups.

Balancing this important set of concerns about how to understand these responses as group responses, Morgan alerts the research to the danger of 'sociological reductionism, whereby the behaviours of individuals are treated as mere manifestations of an overarching group process' (1997;60). In thinking about how the group responses might constitute part of a pupil discourse (and/or a possibly more localised discourse) about exclusion, it was important to recognise at the same time the right of these young people to be heard as individuals. The aim overall is to report a balance of individual and group response and to assert that both have value.

The analysis, then, was undertaken at different levels and from different angles. Each of the three tasks, Concentric Conversations, Disruption Cards and the Behaviour



Questionnaire, was initially analysed separately. Information was collected from all four groups for the Behaviour Questionnaire and from three groups for the Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards, as can be seen in Table 5.3 below. Although all the data related to the themes of the research questions, the three tasks used different approaches and focussed on different aspects of the themes, producing some overlapping and some discrete findings. The data is considered in terms of individual and group responses. In addition, for the Behaviour Questionnaire, the gender of all respondents is known and some comment can therefore be made in this area. Analysis based on gender was not possible for the Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards' responses because the tasks required constant changes of personnel. Also, where appropriate, there is discussion of findings both in terms of the pairs of low and high Excluding schools, and also as a set of responses from the whole group of participants.

## **Focus Group Findings**

It was noted earlier that there is still little advice to aid the analysis of focus group data and this is equally true of the presentation or reporting of findings. However, this research seeks to continue to utilise the distinctive contribution of the focus group as a method of data collection at this stage. It is seen as important to present the findings as a composite of both the content of response and process of response, so that the study always carries an awareness that these young people express views in a social, spatial and temporal context.

### **Disruption Cards**

Data was collected from three of the focus groups, a total of 33 participants on a wide range of questions related to school and discipline. I had assumed that all the groups would be familiar with the format of this task from Social Education classes, but only Group 4 recognised it. However, whether prompted by its familiarity or its newness, the

task was well received by all three groups. It took longest to complete in Group 4, which may have been partly because it was a large group. The ‘sentence starts’ acted as triggers for lively wide-ranging discussion, though turn-taking was not always well observed, leading to some difficulties for recording of discussion in Group 4 in particular. In the other two groups, Groups 1 and 2, there was generally much more rule-following and a less hectic atmosphere, but also some interesting comments.

Table 5.3 shows the questions asked and the responses from each of the three groups. Each individual response is shown on a separate line. These are direct quotations. Any repeated interventions by individuals are in brackets. Italicised words and phrases provide additional contextual comment and elaborate briefly some of the comments made by young people. Bold text indicates the areas of most intense discussion, that is discussion which stimulated the most strongly felt responses. Kitzinger’s concern about group interaction underpins the priority given to noting the ‘ebb and flow’ of contributions made to the questions. Underlined text denotes discussions which gave rise to extended but relaxed contributions, for example, asking about ‘best memory from primary school’.

*Table 5.3 Disruption Cards: responses*

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 4
Sentence starts			
When I started secondary school I felt...	<b>Happy</b> <b>No friends</b> <b>Different journey</b> <b>Nervous</b> <b>Lost</b> <b>(Excited)</b> <b>Small</b>	Scared Excited Lost	I felt like a midget I felt kind of stupid
The most scary person in primary was...	HT who shouted all the time	x	<b>Teachers</b> <b>People in the class</b>
My best memory from primary was...	<b>P7 Teacher</b> <b>Doing what you want</b> <b>Short days</b> <b>Variety</b> <b>Not so serious detentions</b>	x	<u>Moving to here</u> <u>Teacher having a baby</u> <u>My best teacher</u> <i>lots of discussion about favourite teachers</i>
The worst punishment in this school is...	<b>Detention</b> <i>nods of agreement</i> <b>P/ex</b> <b>Exclusion- because</b>	Exclusion	<b>Punishment exercise</b> <b>Being sent out</b> <b>Detention cos you just have to sit quietly</b>

	<b>all your friends are in school</b>		<b>The Base</b>
The last time I handed in homework was..	Last Friday	This morning	x
When people muck about I...	Just join in	x	Laugh Laugh unless they're nippy I fight
The class I behave best in is...	Detention Music	PE	PE Drama Music Not music! Art Maths
If I had to deal with people who upset the class I...	Don't threaten them -just put them out	<b>Talk to them Give them a punishment exercise (But that doesn't work) Suspend them Give them time to think That doesn't work Depends on their mum and dad</b>	Laugh Depends who it is Depends what they do
If I could change one rule	<b>No chewing Eating Drinking in class</b>	<b>Change the school uniform</b>	Be allowed hooded tops in class Caps
One thing I would ban in school...	<b>School uniform <i>extended discussion</i> Modern languages Rugby strips -not! 'Rockport' work most parents school uniform for S5 and S6</b>	Homework Maths French	<b>Teachers that don't listen Ugly teachers Wee smurfs You shouldn't be able to smoke near the school <i>referring to catering staff who smoke at school gate</i></b>
One thing that annoys me is...	Mr X he's a crap teacher ( <i>agreed by some in group</i> )	School starts too early	Teachers not helping
My worst subject is...	Physics cos of the teacher	x	<b>Maths cos everybody's noisy. People need lots of help cos they're stupid. Music cos the teacher tries to be funny but isn't. Social studies cos the teacher doesn't help,</b>

			<b>you wait for ages with your hand up</b>
If I had £50 000 to spend in school I...	<b>Sort the toilets</b> <b>Sort the changing rooms</b>	Make café prices cheaper Common rooms for all year groups	Pick attractive female teachers <i>Lots of discussion about a 'beautiful teacher' led by one male participant seeking support from the group)</i>
My best subject is...	Art	Art PE	x
One thing I like about school is	End of the day Seeing friends Football PE	Getting different subjects Not staying with the same teacher	x
The first thing I do when I get here in the morning...	x	Talk to my friends	x
My best school trip was...	<u>Barcelona</u> <i>Summer activity week trip</i>	<u>Whyttock Park</u> <i>SI residential trip</i>	Paris <i>not a lot of discussion as not many went on this trip</i>
My funniest moment was...	Incident in English – got set up by a classmate	x	x
On thing I got blamed for was...	<i>Participant passed on this</i>	Teachers usually blame who usually does it	<i>Participant passed on this</i>
One place I'd like to visit...	Disneyland, Florida	x	x
One thing I like doing after school is...	<u>Football</u> <u>DJing</u> <u>Computer</u> <u>Watch TV</u> <u>Mucking about with friends</u>	<u>Play station</u> <u>Go out</u> <u>Football</u>	<u>After- school club</u> <u>Hanging about</u> <u>Football team</u> <u>Playing football</u> <u>Watch TV</u> <u>Swimming</u> <u>Go and see Gran</u>
When I think about leaving school I...	I want to be a doctor Be a translator Something to do with football	Have mixed feelings	I cheer!...I don't know what to think... College Egging the teacher Be a drama teacher
One thing I am going to do when I am 18 is...	Go buy a pint of beer in the pub (Miller)	<b>Get drunk and go clubbing</b> <b>Get a job</b> <b>Go on holiday</b> <b>Save up</b>	<b>Go to university to do PE</b> <b>Drink vodka</b> <b>Drive a car</b> <b>Drive a motorbike</b> <b>Get a tattoo</b>

'x' = did not discuss

(adapted from Brandes and Norris 1998 and Phtiaka 1997)



The lengthiest part of the discussion in Group 1 centred around a new school dress code and rules on eating and drinking. Most seemed aggrieved that they had not been involved in the decisions on these changes, and felt that a few 'carefully chosen' parents and pupils had been consulted. The other major topic was a recent school trip to Barcelona, which had involved most of the group. They had clearly greatly enjoyed it and details were still fresh in their minds. In the second session group members were keen to see these comments written up from their first session and to add further oral and written comment, for example, adding to the list of likes about school or verbally reiterating a comment about a disliked teacher.

Group 2's discussions were less wide-ranging, although, interestingly, they talked for longer on the subject of 'dealing with people who upset the class'. There were contributions from most of the group to this question and a sense that opinion was being developed through their discussion. It is interesting to speculate as to whether the departure of the three pupils, described earlier, who had not returned consent forms allowed this discussion to develop.

Group 4's discussions were the most vigorous, least tentative overall, perhaps because there were some strong, enthusiastic characters in the group and this set a tone of openness. In view of their overt enthusiasm it is interesting that the content of their discussions was dominated by talk about negative aspects of their school experience; things they did not like, worst subjects and so on.

As three focus groups completed the Disruption Cards task, it is then possible to explore similarities and differences in the themes and views of these groups. Many of the questions were discussed by all three groups. Contrary to expectation, when the young people in the groups were asked questions about the need for change in school, there was no direct reference to major issues associated with the research. It is not clear whether this was because this was change was seen as too large an issue for contemplation. It seemed that small changes were seen as possible but radical reform was not.

The most enthusiastic discussion referred to the informal curriculum, school trips and outings, to personal interests outside school, and plans for the future. Trigger questions directly related to research questions such as ‘If I had to deal with people who upset the class I would...’, also led to a high level of discussion and group interaction in all three of the schools, as can be seen in Table 5.4 below.

*Table 5.4 Disruption Cards: ‘If I had to deal with people who upset the class I...’*

<b>Trigger Sentence start</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 4</b>
If I had to deal with people who upset the class I...	Don’t threaten them –just put them out	<b>Talk to them</b> <b>Give them a punishment exercise</b> <b>(But that doesn’t work)</b> <b>Suspend them</b> <b>Give them time to think</b> <b>That doesn’t work</b> <b>Depends on their mum and dad</b>	Laugh Depends who it is Depends what they do

In Group 1 the only response was from the person who selected the card, with no additional comments from the rest of the group. Though brief, the response, ‘Don’t threaten them. Just put them out’, was typical of many other responses from all groups across a range of questions in that it sought clear and ‘strict’ teacher response to disruption. Interestingly, there was no elaboration or challenge to the participant’s comments in Group 1, perhaps because all were in agreement or perhaps because the group was sensitive to the fact that one group member had been previously Excluded for theft. Group 2 discussed this question more widely and perhaps more freely, with six of the group of nine participants offering a rapid flow of contributions. The first response may be seen as that of a ‘mediator’ but was followed by a suggestion of a typical sanction of a school discipline system, leading to a discussion of alternatives, some supportive, others more punitive, prompting others in turn to note their lack of effectiveness. Finally, another pupil seems to try to understand the ‘why’, and offer alternative, external explanations about parental responsibility. There was some concern, described earlier,

that Group 4, from a high Excluding school, might be less able to discuss these issues critically. Following the initial, rather flippant response of ‘laugh’, their other responses; with these two separate uses of the word ‘depends’, may suggest an awareness of the subjectivity or the contingent nature of disruptive incidents. However, the need to conform to group expectations may also have prevented further exploration of these intriguing statements (Lewis 1992). Perhaps surprisingly, in none of the groups did discussion of this question evolve into an attack on individual teachers. This may suggest that, despite a frequent dismissal of ‘teachers’, these young people do not always hold individual staff responsible for indiscipline but distinguish between teachers in general and individual teachers in ways similar to the more excluded pupils in this research.

Responses to another question directly related to official Exclusion also produced some interesting responses, as can be seen in Table 5.5 below.

*Table 5.5 Disruption Cards: ‘The worst punishment in this school is...’*

Trigger Sentence start	Group 1	Group 2	Group 4
<b>The worst punishment in this school is...</b>	Detention Punishment exercises Exclusion –because all your friends are in school	Exclusion	Punishment exercise Being sent out Detention cos you just have to sit quietly The Base

Counter to expectation, Exclusion was mentioned only by one group (Group 2) as the ‘worst punishment’ in school. It seemed elsewhere that this question was interpreted in terms of most frequent, or most familiar punishment rather than most serious, so that there was discussion of punishment exercises and detention; the latter again eliciting some strong antagonistic feeling. Interestingly, in the one school with a behaviour support base, referral to the base was seen as a punishment, whereas the school might have seen it as a support.

Only one question seemed to cause discomfort in all three groups: ‘One thing I got blamed for was...’. There was a marked hesitation and avoidance of a personal response.

In one group (Group 2) the response was an assertion that 'teachers usually blame who usually does it'. This seemed to be a kind of retreat into a normative pupil discourse but also reinforces the complexity of peer relationships in schools. Clearly this is a difficult question, perhaps overly intrusive, for a group that is pre-formed and for whom participation in the research will in time become part of their own group history or 'collective remembering' (Kitzinger 1994;134).

It was unfortunate that one of the groups, Group 3, did not have the opportunity for informal respondent validation, an opportunity which was used most productively by the other groups. However, the breadth of discussion arising from the Disruption Cards in the four groups was found to be very valuable overall. Firstly it effectively engaged the young people in an activity which foregrounded their own capacity to speak, to listen to each other, to reflect and to see that this was valued by the research. Secondly, and more specifically in relation to the research questions, the data revealed the strength of their opinions about school discipline and also how this related to other priorities and interests.

### Concentric Conversations

This analysis is based on responses from three focus groups in one high Excluding and two low Excluding schools (33 participants), working in pairs and one triad. Because participants were encouraged to note opposing views where these occurred, there are slightly different numbers of responses to some questions. The questions are outlined below in full as this instrument did not lend itself easily to analysis in matrix form. Summary answers to each of the 13 questions are given, with indications as to how and where the groups differed. In addition, responses are detailed more fully where they emerged as particularly significant. As noted earlier, the nature of the task means that there is no analysis based on gender. Where participants offered more extended responses these are also included.



*Question 1      What were your first thoughts when you were asked to set up the chairs in this way?*

There was a strictly limited amount of time for participants to complete this question. It was included to give a sense of the format of this part of the session and to gauge their overall receptiveness of the group to this kind of activity. The responses from Groups 1 and 2 were similar and mostly positive, 'A different thing to do', or more neutrally, 'Thought we'd have to talk about something to one person'. The responses from Group 4 were mostly negative or questioning for example, 'Not again' or 'saddo', perhaps indicating not only their familiarity with the format but identification with a recalcitrant pupil discourse.

*Question 2      What changes would you make to the school if you were Head Teacher?*

No response challenged the notion that change was necessary or desirable. Four of the six paired responses from Group 1 focused on the need to improve school facilities and resources, while the five responses from Group 2, the other low Excluding school, were all concerned with school rules, mostly about school uniform, with one request for longer holidays and breaks. In the responses from Group 4, the high Excluding school, four from seven noted the need to change the teachers, an issue also noted by one pairing in Group 1. One response also noted the need to change rules and one other concerns about difficult peer relationships; 'stop bullying'(Group 4). There was no direct discussion of Exclusion and only Group 4 noted any aspect of discipline and disruption within a response which noted the need for 'better teachers and stop bullying'. External influences such as parents were not part of any response, and neither was there any reference to the shape of the curriculum.

*Question 3      What do you think the problems might be for a Head teacher wanting to make big changes?*

There was a consistency of response across all focus groups to this question, with the most common response noting the likely lack of resources to fund change. The difficulty of reaching consensus or 'Getting people to agree', as Group 1 described it, was also noted in all schools, although less frequently. It was also suggested that 'People might

not like it' (Group 2). It was not clear if 'people' referred to, for example, pupils, parents, school board, teachers, the local authority or a combination of all of these. In each school, in one or two responses, teachers were mentioned specifically, allied to concerns about their 'laziness' (Group 1) or 'enthusiasm' (Group 1) or 'minimum working time' (Group 2) or difficulties with recruitment (Group 4). There was one reference to gender in one school (Group 4); 'can't choose which school boys attend'.

*Question 4 Do you think the school has a good system for dealing with disruption?*

One high and one low Excluding school offered consistent and similar responses to this question, stating strongly their views that their school did not have a good system for dealing with disruption; 'Pupils get away with mucking about' (Group 1). In Group 2 responses were more mixed. It was intriguing that no response in Group 1 supported the discipline system in that school, despite its being a low Excluding school with fewer discipline problems; 'Teachers are too soft, some favour people, i.e. do their tests for them' (Group 1) said one, but there was some support, albeit rather limited, in the other two schools for their discipline systems. In all three schools there were again one or two more extended responses which referred to the need for teachers to be stricter. One response, in a low Excluding school (Group 1), referred more specifically to the link between disruption and support for pupils, stating, '...only punished, no help given'.

*Question 5 Do you think people should get Excluded for poor attendance?*

There was an even spread of views in around two thirds of the responses, with around half of each group in Group 1 and Group 4 supporting the idea of Exclusion for non-attendance and half viewing it as counter-productive, 'because it will mean that they're off school for a longer time' or 'they're just wanting more time off' (Group 1). In Group 1, one of the responses linked thoughts about non-attendance with the popularity of the school, saying, 'Other people want to get in and people who miss school are just wasting time and money'. Only one response in one school (Group 2) suggested that the reasons behind non-attendance were relevant to a decision about whether Exclusion might be an appropriate response to that non-attendance. No response made any comparison between

Exclusion for non-attendance and Exclusion for disruption and there did not seem to be any suggestion of direct experience of Exclusion used as a response to non-attendance.

*Question 6      Apart from Exclusion, why else might someone be off school?*

There was a range of suggested possible reasons for absence from school, including medical reasons, a school trip or event, truancy, bullying, family issues and holidays. The most common response across all three schools was 'medical reasons'. Truancy was noted in at least one response in all schools. Family problems were noted in responses from both a high (Group 1) and a low Excluding school (Group 4). Exploration of likely reasons for non-attendance led to one of the few times when fathers were brought into any discussion, albeit with dark humour when one participant suggested, 'Dad's got AIDS' (Group 4) as a reason for absence. Humour was also apparent in another suggestion of a possible reason for absence from school, 'Lost in the Woods' (Group 4) referring to a local project of that name which works with disaffected and Excluded local youth. This kind of knowledge, which admitted of alternatives, or of complicated lives beyond school, was rare and only revealed in Group 4 in the high Excluding school. Other suggested reasons were noted in one or two responses only, with no clear pattern associated with individuals schools. It is interesting that 'bullying' is noted here and also earlier in response to Question 2.

*Question 7      Do you think Exclusion works?*

Discussion about official Exclusion for indiscipline provoked some vigorous discussion in all groups and, as can be seen in detail in Table 5.6, this led to some participants in all three groups, expressing views very similar to those of the young people who participated in the individual interviews.

Table 5.6 Concentric Conversations: 'Do you think that Exclusion works?'

Group	1	2	4
Participants'	✓ No	✓ Yes and no	✓ No, sometimes
Comments	✓ No	✓ No	✓ Yes, it does get rid of the idiots from our school
	✓ I think it does, sometimes, depends on the pupil, if someone has ambition and wants to be there then it is more likely to work. If they aren't bothered and haven't ambition, they probably don't care and then Exclusion won't work.	✓ No	✓ No it does not
		✓ No because they enjoy being off school	✓ No people think it's good getting time off
			✓ No it bloody well doesn't
			✓ No!
			✓ Yes/no
			✓ Yes
			✓ No

This question revealed an intensity in some pupils' views and some thoughtful and succinct reflection. The focus provided by working in a smaller group but also within strict time limits for each question seemed to prove useful. Early reservations about whether young people would put aside a need to be 'cool' and indifferent receded here as they began to find themselves absorbed by the demands of the questions.

In Group 1 there was an extended response exploring an idea of differential effectiveness; that Exclusion might work for some people some of the time, a notion which was also explored in some of the individual interviews. There was also some reference to the aims of Exclusion, which, contrary to policy but perhaps reflecting wider public perception, were talked about in terms of punishment and the need to change behaviour of individual pupils. No-one here talked about it as a 'last resort'. However two responses, one in a high (Group 4) and one in a low (Group 2) Excluding school talked again about the possibility of Exclusion being counter-productive, 'Because they enjoy being off school' (Group 4). One response (Group 4) interpreted effectiveness in terms of the needs of the generality of pupils, 'It does get rid of the idiots from our school'. A small number of responses in each school thought that Exclusion was effective. One response explored the topic more critically; 'Sometimes, it depends on the pupil - if someone has ambition and wants to be there then it is more likely to work. If they aren't bothered and haven't



ambition they probably don't care and then Exclusion doesn't work' (Group 1). This was the one response which noted the possible short or long-term consequences of Exclusion.

*Question 8 What do you see as being the main aims of Exclusion from school?*

This question was discussed in only two schools, one high (Group 4) and one low (Group 2) Excluding schools so the number of responses is more limited. Responses were similar in both schools, suggesting that punishment and seeking a change in behaviour were the main aims. There was no clear sense that one of these reasons was seen as more important. One response noted an understanding of the aim in terms of sending a message to other young people about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour (Group 4). One response noted the intended aims of Exclusion and juxtaposed that with a reiteration of the view that Exclusion did not work (Group 2).

*Question 9 Do you think pupils have any influence on who gets Excluded?*

This question was discussed in only one school (Group 4). Here responses suggested the question was understood to be hypothetical. There was equal support for and against pupil involvement in this area of decision-making. There was no extension of this discussion into other areas of decision-making in school life. One response suggested that young people might be involved depending on the severity of the incident, that if viewed seriously they felt they should not have influence.

*Question 10 Do you think that people who have been Excluded in this school have always deserved it?*

This question was discussed in only two schools, one high (Group 4) and one low (Group 2) Excluding schools so the number of responses is again more limited. Both groups of responses challenged the notion that Exclusion had always been merited. In Group 2 this was unanimous, with four of the five paired responses offering explanations such as 'They don't always' or '[they have]not got the full story'. In Group 4 too there were explanations offered, for example, 'No! Cos half the time the teachers are strange and blame people they don't like', carrying an implication of the importance of reputation, which also emerged in conversation with excluded pupils. Although there was no direct mention of any personal involvement in incidents leading to Exclusion, there seems to be

a strong and widely agreed set of opinions on the matter across these high and low Excluding schools.

*Question 11 Do all the people who disrupt lessons get Excluded at one time or another?*

This question was discussed in only two schools, one high (Group 4) and one low (Group 2) Excluding school so that although some comparison can again be made in terms of schools with lower and higher rates of disruptive behaviour, generalisation from these responses is necessarily more limited. In Group 2 the responses were unanimous; those who disrupt are not always Excluded. In Group 4, only one response disagreed with this view and most added some explication; ‘No they don’t and they should sometimes’ and ‘No cos some teachers like the pupil and say, “oh, just this once”’, again suggesting the importance of reputation. It was also suggested that some disruptive pupils are less likely to get caught. There was no discussion of possible gender or ethnic differences or the influence of school knowledge about home circumstances.

*Question 12 What are the signs that someone is heading for Exclusion?*

Again, only two schools, one high (Group 4) and one low (Group 2) Excluding school, discussed this question and responded in quite distinct ways.

*Table 5.7 Concentric Conversations: ‘What are the signs that someone is heading for Exclusion?’*

Group	2	4
Participants	✓ Red card/yellow card	✓ Talking/answering back
Comment	✓ Red card, being bad	✓ Shouting
	1. Red card	✓ Swearing
	2. Red card and still behaving badly	✓ Throwing stuff at teacher’s face like someone got chucked out for in social education
	3. Red card, neggys	✓ Swearing/violence/shouting/disruption
		✓ Shouting/swearing/throwing tantrums and things
		✓ Shouting
		✓ Cos they swear, hit, throw stuff, talking and laughing
		✓ If the head comes and collects them. Or if they just won’t settle
		✓ They’re bad

The Group 2 participants all responded very similarly and in terms of the visible signs of the discipline system in their school. They talked about red cards, yellow cards and 'neggys' (negative referrals). In contrast, the participants in Group 4 nearly all offered extended descriptions of a wide range of possible disruptive behaviours, for example, 'swearing/throwing stuff at the teacher's face like someone got chucked out for in social' with only one referring to the discipline system; 'the head comes and collects them'. As can be seen, the group in the low Excluding school (Group 2) focussed on a specific set of responses defined by the school discipline system whereas the group in the high Excluding school offered a lengthy and descriptive list of misbehaviours. As this was a written task, rather than an oral one, and participants worked in pairs, the consistency within the two sets of group responses is interesting. Although it is not possible to generalise from one small piece of data, the differences seem suggestive. It may be that in the school with lower Exclusion and less disruption that such a discipline system works well and is clearly and consistently understood by pupils; although this might contradict the view expressed elsewhere of some in that same group that the school deals poorly with disruption. The larger range of responses from the group in the high Excluding school seem more chaotic and might be understood to reflect their experience in school. One of the responses seems to refer to a recent incident in class. The Group 4 list seems to come closest to a definition of the characteristics of an Excluee though it focusses on behaviour not causes.

*Question 13 Do you think that teachers think Exclusion works?*

Again, only 2 groups, in one high (Group 4) and one low (Group 2) Excluding school, discussed this question. Two responses, one in each school, indicated that they regarded it as unreasonable to ask them about teachers' views. It is interesting to note how clear these two responses were in terms of distinguishing areas where they felt able to comment on legitimately and areas where they felt they could not. However, most other young people in both schools emphasised a belief that teachers think the Exclusion system is effective, with one response in each school expanding on this by saying, for example, 'The teachers probably think it works but it doesn't' (Group 2). These

reflections go some way to explaining the generally negative view of teachers which emerges here.

These two group tasks were planned to explore many overlapping themes and they are therefore considered together here. With an expressed interest in how attention to group process may contribute to group findings, attention is drawn to the three main areas where this seemed significant; the discussions about how to deal with a pupil who upset the class, the signs that a pupil was at risk of official Exclusion and what was considered to be the worst punishment in school. All of these questions seemed to reflect discussions these pupils had had many times before but also allowed space for ideas to develop. It is disappointing that, despite the efforts made, there is still a lack of group interaction data elsewhere though this is due in part to issues noted earlier with regard to taping and transcription. The pace of activity and the focus on the tasks was high in all three schools which participated. The physical activity seemed to engage the young people well, with some requests to do 'just one more' if we were running out of time. The disadvantage of this fast pacing may be considered to lie in the brevity of some of the responses.

Responses to questions about change were interesting in both sets of data. It seemed that each group, perhaps each school, had a set of overlapping concerns. In Group 1 it was the new dress code, facilities and resources such as books and folders. Group 2, within a school which has undergone an extensive refurbishment, it was school dress code and, again, facilities, and in Group 4 it was dress code and also teachers. No response in any of the groups took the opportunity to directly discuss discipline, disruption or any aspect of Exclusion. It was also interesting that, for all the groups, their concerns were internal to the school, with no reference, for example, to parents or the wider community. These findings are similar to those reported in the pupil responses in the National Debate on Education (2002). In a Finnish study which asked over 200 school pupils of a similar age about their vision of the ideal school, Lahelma (2002) notes that many of her research participants 'could not or would not, tell us what they would like to change in their own school... There were some wishes for less homework, shorter school days - less but not



different' (2002; 371). Lahelma's findings are mirrored here by the frequently limited scope of desired changes are mirrored to some extent here, and focus attention on the 'smallness' of young peoples desires.

It might be assumed that participants' requests for a ban on school uniform or for longer breaks between classes signal contentment with the larger issues in schools. However, these small requests were often just as vehemently expressed as views about Exclusion, disruption and indiscipline, belying any superficial insignificance. It seems appropriate then to view these discussions as equally 'serious' and to explore possible alternative constructions of these responses. The effects of young people identifying themselves as 'pupils' has been noted earlier with reference to the negotiation between researcher and group members in the early stages of the fieldwork. These apparently minor concerns may, as Lahelma suggests, 'reveal and exaggerate that which is difficult to verbalise, the lack of autonomy that young people feel at school' (Lahelma 2002; 371). The small requests may signal, not contentment then, but a sense that the opportunities to effect change on the larger scale are beyond their grasp. It may be, as suggested earlier, that this is one effect of schools which have a limited, and ultimately limiting version of 'school' and 'discipline' (Slee 1998), and that these young people lack the knowledge or experience of other possible systems with which to build a more searching agenda for change.

In a discussion of the potential barriers to change there was concurrence in all three groups with a wider discourse in schools about the lack of resources to facilitate change, but there was also, by some participants in each group, a suggestion that change was likely to meet with resistance, even if resources were to be made available; 'People might not want the changes' or 'People won't like it' (Group 2). It is interesting that this awareness of a kind of 'resistance' to the change process permeates discussion in all three schools, and that it is sometimes attributed to pupils, sometimes to teachers and sometimes simply 'people'. When resistance is understood as part of larger questions of agency, this consensus may suggest that these young people see power in their schools in quite complex ways; residing in teachers, in pupils, and more amorphously, in 'people';

suggesting something in common with Foucault's 'capillary' notion of power (Fraser 1989, Allan 1999)

In all three groups there was also an emerging and generally negative view of teachers which contrasted with many of the comments made by young people in the individual interviews. It may be that this negativity reveals a difference of opinion between the interviewees and the generality. Certainly, many of the interview participants had experienced relatively close contact with individual teachers in troubled times, and perhaps had more opportunity for a relationship to develop which confounded expectations of 'pupil' and 'teacher' identity. Then again, the difference may reflect different acceptable views in private and public situations (Armstrong *et al.* 2000;62). This difference in view is not taken as indicative of a greater honesty or dishonesty in either situation. It is likely, however, that the views of teachers expressed in the focus group may usefully contribute to an understanding of a wider discourse about 'teachers' among young people when they identify themselves as 'pupils'.

Discussion about disruption and school management responses, in both Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards, revealed a dominant view in all three groups which challenged the effectiveness of their school's system for dealing with disruption. Although this was not an unanimous response, its prevalence in both high and low Excluding schools was surprising. Because the high Excluding schools have more internal disruption, it might reasonably be assumed that they also have a more disrupted generality of pupils and that the latter would therefore be more critical of their school or fellow pupils or the teachers, or of all of these. However, it is interesting that again responses were not distinguished by whether they came from a group in a high or low Excluding school. The strength of reaction and commonality of view, to the question in all groups was quite marked. This suggests that a broad range of pupils have concerns about approaches to disruptive behaviour. A young respondent in a study by MacBeath coined the phrase, 'workpeace', and talked about the importance of a teacher's ability to provide this 'workpeace' (1999;42).

A number of related concerns were also revealed, for example, 'Teachers are too soft. Some favour some people' (Group 1) or 'Pupils get away with mucking about' (Group 1) or 'Half the time the teachers blame people they don't like' (Group 4). These statements and responses hold themes to which young people in all groups returned repeatedly and which have been noted in previous studies (Munn, Lloyd and Cullen 2000, Crozier and Antiss 1995, Garner 1995, Chaplain 1996); a perceived lack of teacher 'strictness' and a lack of teacher consistency in dealing with disruptive pupils, bound up with the importance of reputation. This might at first seem to challenge the findings of the Scottish School Leavers Survey: 17 in 97, which reported that most pupils 'thought their school dealt well with any bullying and harassment that went on' (2000;8). However, this large-scale survey also noted that 'nearly half of the respondents said that many teachers could not keep control in class' (2000;8).

This call for teachers to be stricter is so widespread in this study and in previous studies, that it is worth considering in more detail and in a recent large-scale study by Osler (2000) with pupils of similar age, around two-thirds 'found teachers either more strict or about the same as their parents' (2000;8). If the current arguments surrounding poor parenting and its consequences for pupil behaviour and readiness to learn have any grounds, then the finding that teachers are 'more strict' than home is to be expected. Less clear is what might lie behind the second part of this statement; that a majority of secondary age pupils in this study felt that the level of strictness at school was 'about the same' as at home. This seems to challenge the discourse about problems in school stemming primarily from poor parenting and suggests a more complex set of explanations may be necessary.

I would suggest that there is an important difference between what young people are saying and what teachers are saying on this issue. Pupils do not use the term 'discipline' but they do talk about teachers who are fair, who listen, who have a sense of humour, who set high academic standards and who respect young people. Osler's study makes a further telling point about pupil understanding of teachers and discipline when she reports that, 'most of the difficulties identified in [the pupils'] relations with teachers they

explained in terms of inadequate structures, rather than lack of experience or goodwill on the part of individual adults' (2000;55). Young people's sense of 'discipline' or 'dominion', then, is perhaps both broader and more finely textured, and, I would suggest, closer to the definitions referred to earlier by Slee (1998) following Locke and Aquinas; carrying ideas of nurturing, of respect, of self-efficacy. Perhaps then the criticisms, part of the challenge given voice by the generality of young people in this study is about the current system's restricted meanings of 'discipline'; with its emphasis on the 'authoritarian' rather than 'authoritative' (Baumrind 1991).

It is interesting that broader understandings of exclusion produced less contentious, calmer discussion. Understanding of the range of individual circumstances and links to possible reasons for absence from school emerged from the discussions in all groups but were particularly clear in two of the responses (Groups 1 and 4). Discussions were, however, relatively brief and the vocabulary seemed relatively under-developed, suggesting that, in contrast to talk about disruption and discipline systems, this may not be a topic of such common group discussion, perhaps felt to belong more properly to the private or more domestic spheres. All groups noted truancy as a reason for absence from school, which suggests that truancy is part of their school experience and that they are comfortable enough with the idea to talk about it. Perhaps more surprisingly, there was only one mention of bullying though it is recognised that the absence of 'bullying' from responses does not necessarily indicate its absence from schools. As with the discussions about teachers, this may support the idea, noted earlier, that it was important in the group to maintain friendships and seek 'secure social identities' (Ridge 2002;104), and that this therefore precluded or limited some possible responses. As a reminder of what may be regarded as the limitations of the group interview method Kitzinger notes, 'the group may censor any deviation from group standards - inhibiting people from talking about certain things' (1994;110). This is useful data, nonetheless, in that it reinforces a growing sense in the findings from the Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards, of there being a common experience for pupils in school, regardless of which school.



### *Comment on Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards*

The clearest findings from these sets of data are a mixture of the expected and the unexpected. Interestingly, there seemed to be little substantive difference in terms of themes or views in the three groups which participated. It was not clear that any differences that were found could be accounted for by the different levels of disruption and Exclusion and non-attendance. Official Exclusion is not seen as a major event by these young people, perhaps because for so many it is so far removed from their experience of school. However, they do have clear ideas about both the aims of Exclusion and its effectiveness. Systems for dealing with disruption are often derided. Exclusion is seen as serious. Exclusion is understood as punishment and the effectiveness of official Exclusion is widely challenged, with some suggestions that it is counter-productive. This suggests that in these schools, the generality of young people may not see Exclusion used as policy intends, and that they see a system with significant inconsistencies.

### **Behaviour Questionnaire**

The other main set of findings from the focus groups emerges from a questionnaire completed by 46 young people across all four schools. The findings are considered separately from Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards for a number of reasons. In contrast with the other data collection instruments, the young people were asked here to reflect individually and in writing (using a tick-box format). They were asked to report on their own involvement in disruption and how they felt about their peers' disruption, giving the opportunity to explore whether and how these might be related. In addition, because all four groups contributed instead of three, this permits a fuller examination of patterns of similarity and difference across the pairs of schools. Finally, information about gender was also available for all completed questionnaires and therefore some analysis was carried out on that basis.

It is important to state that the Behaviour Questionnaires are considered separately not because they are seen to have intrinsically greater value as individual responses and therefore somehow closer to the truth. They too have a context; a group context, and are valued as both group and individual data though perhaps with a different balance. In each case these questionnaires were completed within the group session while the researcher was present, ensuring that issues could be addressed as they arose. The only unexpected question which arose was a query in two groups (Groups 2 and 4) about the meaning of the word, ‘occasionally’; a reminder of the constant need to monitor use of language and assumptions about definitions and comprehension. I was able to assist one young person to complete the questionnaire where her comprehension was not matched by reading and writing abilities.

*Table 5.8 Behaviour Questionnaire: Summary*

*N=46*

Group	Female	Male	Total
1	5	5	10
2	4	5 (+3)	9
3	8	6	14
4	8 (+7)	5 (+1)	13
Total	25	21	46

*(numbers in brackets refer to participants who made additional written comments. Total N = 11)*

### *Method of Analysis*

The analysis utilised two main approaches, involving both quantitative and qualitative methods. The Behaviour Questionnaire used a rating scale which allowed for some quantitative analysis. In addition, at the end of the later questionnaires, completed by Groups 2 and 4, space was included for an open response to the question ‘Is there anything else that classmates have done that really put you off working/annoyed you?’ Eleven out of a possible 32 participants took the opportunity to add their own comments here. These are reported separately.

### *Own involvement in disruption/rule breaking*

Tables 5.9 and 5.10 below show the responses for the total groups of participants. Not all participants in the total group (of 46 young people) gave responses to each question and an asterisk indicates the number of participants for these questions.

*Table 5.9 Behaviour Questionnaire: Own involvement in disruption/rule breaking*

*Total = 46*

	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	A lot
Smoking in the school grounds	44	1	1	0
Been suspended/Excluded for causing trouble	43	3	0	0
Swearing at teacher	39	6	1	0
Fighting after school	36	6	4	0
Drinking at the school disco	35	7	2	2
Refusing to do a punishment exercise	34	11	1	0
Fighting in the classroom	31	14	1	0
Taking up teacher time	30	12	4	0
Fighting in the corridor	28	17	1	0
Winding other people up so they get in trouble	28	16	2	0
Got negative referral* (N=33)	27	2	3	1
Picking on people	25	16	5	0
Skiving school* (N=33)	24	6	3	0
Not bringing PE kit	22	16	6	2
Throwing things	17	25	4	0
Swearing at pupils	15	20	8	3
Shouting out	14	24	5	3
Forgetting Maths homework	15	15	12	4
Interrupting the teacher	12	23	8	3
Wandering about the class	11	24	8	3
Turning round in your seat	4	21	10	11

*(adapted from Johnstone and Munn 1992, 1997)*

As can be seen, these groups are not without pupils with more complex lives, or additional difficulties, but importantly, these young people constitute a small minority of the group as a whole. Overall, the young people have little direct involvement in the kinds of experience which comprise the most serious kinds of disruption, although they do report involvement in more minor infringements of rules. These findings are very similar to initial findings from the large ongoing longitudinal study, the Edinburgh Study

of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC) (2002, 2003). The responses to these questions are important because they support the notion, despite the reservations noted earlier, that these groups as a whole can be said to be representative of a typical student group; a generality. This permits some confidence, then, that their views offer a distinct contribution to the research and to deepening our understanding of exclusion.

#### *Effects of Peer Involvement in Disruption/Rule Breaking*

The other set of responses in this questionnaire report these same individuals' views and feelings about their peers' disruption or rule breaking. Again, not all questions were answered by all participants and an asterisk indicates where the total number of responses was lower, usually between 43 and 45 instead of 46. In addition there are 31 responses to the question about unauthorised absence, known locally as 'skiving', at the end of the table.



Table 5.10 Behaviour Questionnaire: Effects of peer involvement in disruption/rule breaking Total =46

Disruptive behaviour/rule	Put you off a bit	Seriously annoyed you	Did Not Bother You	Hasn't happened
Interrupting the teacher	22	6	18	0
Shouting out	19	10	17	0
Picking on people	19	12	14	1
Throwing things	17	13	15	1
Swearing at teacher	17	6	21	2
Winding other people up so they get in trouble	17	8	17	4
Fighting in the classroom	15	11	18	2
Fighting in the corridor*	11	6	24	4
Swearing at pupils*	11	4	28	1
Refusing to do a punishment exercise	9	5	31	1
Wandering about the class	7	2	36	1
Turning round in your seat	7	4	34	1
Taking up teacher time	7	2	29	8
Been suspended/Excluded for causing trouble*	5	5	22	11
Got 'negative referral'*	5	1	26	1
Smoking in the school grounds*	4	7	23	10
Forgetting Maths homework	4	2	39	1
Fighting after school*	2	6	33	2
Drinking at the school disco*	2	0	27	16
Not bringing PE kit*	1	2	41	1
Skiving school* (N= 31)	1	2	28	0

(adapted from Johnstone and Munn 1992, 1997)

Importantly, these responses reveal that these young people are familiar with the major issues of disruption and exclusion. The lack of responses to the option 'hasn't happened' gives confidence in the questionnaire itself by suggesting that the majority of these behaviours are recognised by young people in these groups. Again, the responses reflect early findings from ESYTC that around 60% of pupils reported that their peers 'messed around most days in school' (2002;128). Among those behaviours which were unfamiliar to the groups it should be noted that one group (Group 4) reported that they had never had a school disco. Also, in one school (Group 2), where the toilets were

attractively refurbished and used by pupils, staff and members of the public, group members reported that there was little or no smoking in the school.

The consistently high number of young people here who reported that a behaviour 'did not bother' them would seem to suggest that they feel relatively unaffected by such behaviour. Although such a response might be expected with regard, for example, to the non-attendance of a class member, it is interesting that this response was so common overall. This may be understood as a problem with the rubric of the questionnaire. It was seen as important in framing the questionnaire to use language with which young people would be comfortable. However, it is also recognised that young people, at this stage of their lives, and in our culture, often use the phrase 'not bothered' to preserve dignity or privacy, or to claim distance from the concerns of authority. It was hoped that the informality of the other possible options for response; for example, 'put you off a bit' would present as alternatives equally acceptable to them, but clearly, in a questionnaire, there is no way of checking this. While caution may be exercised in the analysis of these responses, then, it is also important to continue to take young people's views seriously. It is feasible that many young people, by the time they reach this stage of secondary school, do feel indifferent, 'not bothered'. They may indeed have developed a resilience (Schoon and Bynner 2003) or 'stress resistance' (Hayden 1997) and found effective ways to block out some of the disruptive activities of others, despite widespread assumptions about the detrimental effects of that disruption. It is also acknowledged that although schools are public places, this does not mean that all young people see all that goes on around them, any more than the adults in authority do. Some behaviours and disruption will be more visible than others.

It is also worth noting that although the most common response to the majority of questions was, as noted above, indifference or 'not bothered', this should not distract attention from the high numbers of young people who also reported feeling affected at different levels by some aspects of disruption in school. There were some clear indications of the kind of behaviour which caused the most disturbance to them. These included 'shouting out', 'interrupting the teacher', 'throwing things', and 'picking on

people'. It is interesting that this list closely matches those behaviours reported by teachers as being 'particularly difficult to deal with' in Johnstone and Munn's (1992, 1997) large-scale surveys of indiscipline in Scottish schools. The common ground with Johnstone and Munn's surveys suggests that teachers and young people feel similarly about some of the same problems. This might therefore support the current argument made by teachers about the cumulative effects of classroom indiscipline on the generality of pupils. However, it also brings into focus one significant premise of that argument; the distinction between those disrupted and those who disrupt. It is perhaps also significant that this list of most disruptive behaviour includes two examples concerned with peer social relations, and a third, 'shouting out', which suggest an interesting parallel with previous findings which suggest that pupils dislike teachers who shout (Munn, Lloyd and Cullen, 2000, Chaplain 1996, John 1996, Pomeroy 1999).

There is further support for the centrality of these particular issues of disruption in the responses from the 11 participants who offered their own comment at the end of the questionnaire. The three responses out of a possible nine, all from young men, in Group 2 merely noted that there was no other behaviour or incident which had upset them. In Group 4, however, eight from a possible 14 used this space to add comments. These are noted below as they appeared in the questionnaires except for one or two minor spelling changes.

Table 5.11 Behaviour Questionnaire: 'Is there anything else that has really annoyed or upset you?'

'Calling names'
'Mucking about and running round our table'
'Mucking about'
'Talking all the time and they won't be quiet'
'Swearing at the teacher and don't care if the head comes in or anything. A lot of things annoys me when I can't get my work don especially in social [education]'
'People being horrible to teacher/winding teacher up'
'When people laugh behind your back and I get paranoid or when they write things/put things on your back or bag or when people never shut up'.
'When teachers don't listen to pupils views'

Although only a minority of the 46 young people contributed their individual thoughts in this way, these responses are given in full for two reasons. Firstly, these extended responses are in marked contrast to the brevity of the same group's response to similar questions in earlier tasks. This may suggest that group pressure precluded the display of too much concern about disruption in oral discussion, and that they felt able to respond more personally here. It may be that this particular group felt moved to take this opportunity to express themselves because they see a lot of disruption around them; Group 4 is in a high Excluding school. It may, however, also suggest that the group members, by the time they came to complete the questionnaire, felt better able to articulate some of their own feelings on topics discussed in earlier tasks. It may be a combination of these interesting possibilities. Secondly, in terms of the content of the responses, they are worth printing in full, because they are in themselves important data, a collection of disparate comments which nevertheless convey a shared sense of frustration; at teachers, at the school managers, but mostly with their peers. It might be assumed that because of the prevalence of setting by ability in Scottish schools, that the 'generality' of pupils in any school would be unlikely to experience as much disruption and to have as full a view of it as, say younger pupils in mixed settings or a different educational culture. Clearly, at least in this group, this expectation is confounded.



The responses from the generality as a whole, then, confirm expectations that they have little involvement in behaviour viewed as seriously unacceptable by schools. However, they also confirm that they are involved in more low-level disruption than expected. This may be understood as part of a resistance by young people, revealing the complexity of power relationships in schools. Many young people report indifference to disruption by their peers but closer analysis suggests that there are some negative aspects of pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher relations which do cause significant upset. The more extended responses expand on the notion of a sense of frustration, and of a sense of turbulence in secondary schools.

*Are pupils in high Excluding schools involved in more disruption?*

Most of these young people have experience of only one secondary school, so that the data is limited in what it can say about perceptions of relative levels of disruption, or the cumulative effects of certain behaviours in these different schools. Nonetheless the participants responses demonstrate that they have clear expectations of what constitutes acceptable behaviour in the context of their school experience. Although some reference has been made to school-based differences in the findings from Concentric Conversations and Disruption Cards, the responses from the questionnaire provide an opportunity to consider some aspects of this in more detail.

It might be assumed that the generality in schools with higher levels of disruption would also have higher overall numbers of young people directly involved in low level and major disruption. It was noted earlier that the content of the contributions from Group 4 in a high Excluding school was largely negative and findings from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC) indicate that ‘those with negative attitudes to school were more involved in delinquency than those with positive attitudes’ (2002;124). Studies in criminology have linked adult offending and misbehaviour in school (Smith and McVie 2003). Tables 5.12 (a) and (b) show responses from all four groups, and compares reported individual involvement in some of the most common and some of the most major examples of unacceptable behaviour. The figures are a composite of all

young people who responded by saying they were involved in these behaviours ‘occasionally’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘a lot’.

*Table 5.12 Behaviour Questionnaire: Are pupils in high Excluding schools involved in more disruption?*

	Group 1 Total N= 10	Group 2 Total N= 9	Group 3 Total N= 13	Group 4 Total N = 14
Official Exclusion	1	1*	1	0
Unauthorised non-attendance	4	2	1	3
Negative referral	2	1	2	3
Shouting out	9	5	10	7
Throwing things	8	4	8	9
Picking on people	4	6	7	4
Interrupting the teacher	9	7	9	9
Turning round in your seat	10	9	11	12
Wandering about the class	9	4	9	13
Forgetting Maths homework	10	8	5	8
Swearing at pupils	9	7	9	6

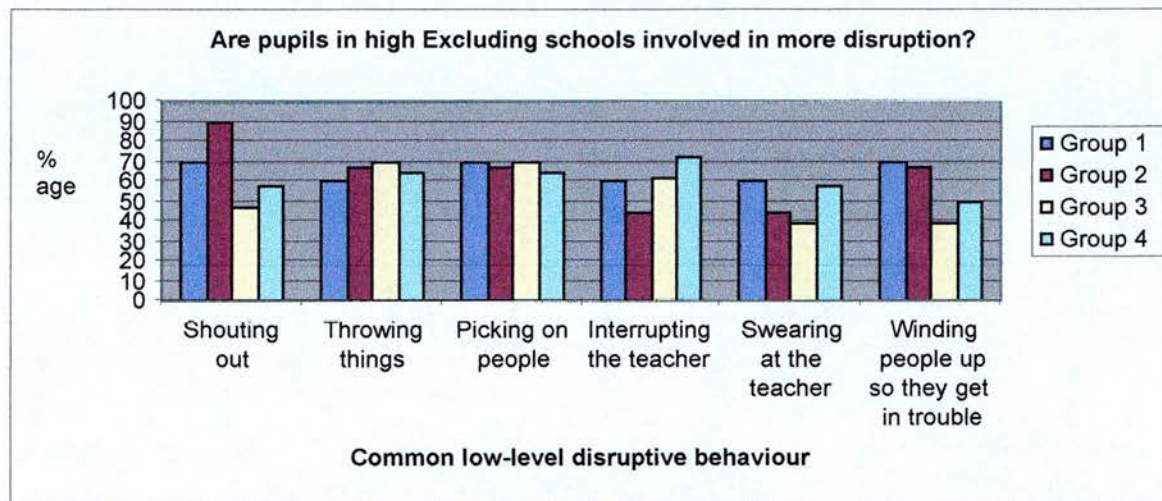
*\* not recorded in school records*

*High Excluding schools are Group 3 and Group 4 (shaded)*

As can be seen from this table, there are more similarities than differences. In three of the four groups (Groups 1, 2 and 3) one person had been ‘suspended’/Excluded once. No-one in any group reported this experience happening more than once. In each group one person admitted to ‘skiving’ occasionally. In Group 4, two people reported truanting sometimes. Nobody in any group said that it happened often. The questionnaire also asked participants to indicate whether they were aware, and/or how often they had received, some kind of negative ‘referral’ for their behaviour. In each group, one young person reported being the subject of some kind of internal referral or sanction occasionally. One person in each of Groups 1 and 4 reported that they were aware of being the subject of referrals sometimes. Only in Group 4 did a participant report receiving a lot of referrals. Looking at the behaviours which were reported to be most common, it is clear that there were only slight differences between schools. All of these behaviours are relatively minor if taken individually and would not in themselves provide

adequate grounds for official Exclusion. However, such data also highlights the cumulative and powerful effect of these many small acts of disruption or resistance.

Fig 5.2 Behaviour Questionnaire: Are pupils in high Excluding schools involved in more disruption?



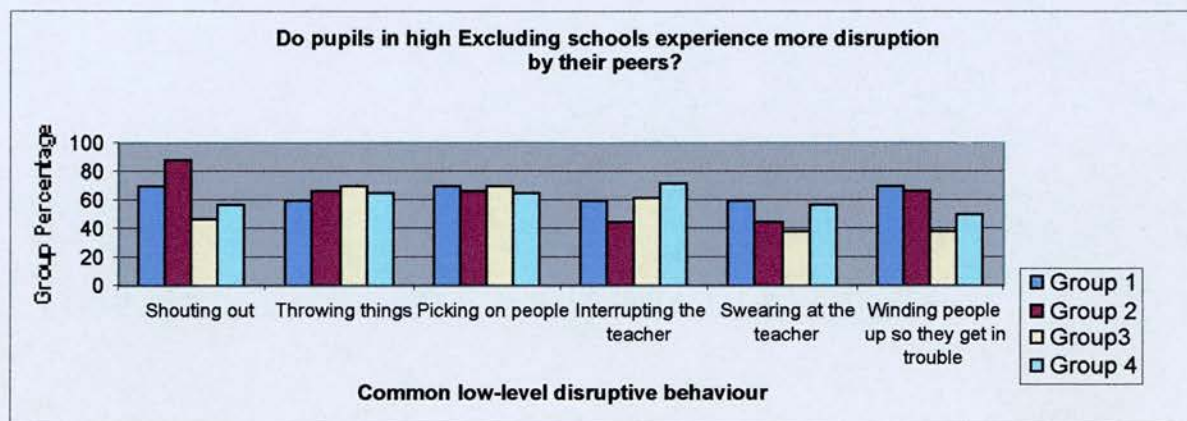
As can be seen there were some varying levels of response to the behaviours listed, but no clear pattern emerges which might suggest that among these young people, and these schools, the differences were related to the levels of Exclusion in school.

*Do pupils in high Excluding schools experience more disruption by their peers?*

There was also an interest in the extent to which the generality in different kinds of schools might experience peer disruption differently. As noted previously, all groups reported feeling the effects of the most common low level disruptive behaviours. Figure 5.3 below shows that some marginal differences in perception of peer indiscipline were reported. Again, these figures are a composite of all young people who responded by saying that they were affected at some level, whether at a minor level or more seriously.



Fig 5.3 Behaviour Questionnaire Do pupils in high Excluding schools experience more peer disruption?



Again, some difference in levels of response among the groups can be seen and there is some slight indication that the generality in the low Excluding schools felt more affected by some disruption, although Group 3, in a high Excluding school reported the lowest overall levels of young people feeling affected by disruption of their peers. This raises a series of questions about the actual levels of indiscipline in these schools, pupils' relative tolerance levels and the relationship between attitudes to one's own behaviour and that of others. The lack of difference may be most easily explained in terms of lower pupil expectations in a high Excluding school. Perhaps the pupils in more unsettled schools, such as those in Group 3, become inured to the disruption levels. Then again, it may be worth exploring whether they develop more effective or more flexible strategies for maintaining focus because of greater exposure to disruptive behaviour. Alternatively it may be argued that they may have lower expectations of what counts as acceptable behaviour. It is also worth considering whether the young people in Groups 1 and 2 have different expectations of behaviour in the school environment, despite reporting similar levels of personal involvement in indiscipline. These seem to be me to be fundamentally important questions about what may be happening in schools. While it is interesting to speculate, it would useful to explore these possible explanations in more detail with the young people themselves.



In addition to the main findings here, there seem to be particular sets of responses which might link to specific incidents and a 'collective remembering' (Kitzinger 1994) for each group. For Group 1, fighting in the classroom was noted as causing disruption by eight of the 10 group members. In Group 2, five of the nine group members reported feeling disrupted by someone refusing to do a punishment exercise. Finally, Group 4, in the other high Excluding school, reported feeling more disrupted than other groups in the study, by fighting in the corridor, fighting in the classroom, smoking in school and pupils swearing at the teacher. Further development of the questionnaire might clarify whether these differences are accounted for by different levels of disruption in different schools or different levels of tolerance to it.

*What is the relationship between those disrupted and those who disrupt?*

These questions lead to a further important question about the relationship between those who disrupt and those disrupted. It has been suggested that the data emerging from discussions with the generality of pupils and excluded pupils reveals that the distinction between these groups is blurred. There is then a legitimate interest in exploring whether or not the people who report most disruption by their peers are more or less likely to be involved in disruption themselves. It should be noted that the questions about one's own behaviour and that of peers do not ask exactly the same question. The questions about one's own behaviour ask about the frequency of involvement and the questions about the behaviour of peers ask about effects of that behaviour. This data, then, cannot give a full picture of how often these behaviours occur in the experience of these young people. However, it can begin to map an area about which little is known.

The data was analysed in order to establish which young people described themselves as most 'seriously annoyed' by disruption, and nine respondents were identified. They had all indicated that they were 'seriously annoyed' by five or more types of behaviour listed in the questionnaire. Six of the nine were in Group 4 and none were in Group 2. This is interesting because it offers, I would argue, the first substantial indication of differences between the high and low Excluding schools. Group 4 was also the group which made the highest number of additional written comments about 'things that annoyed' them in

the questionnaires. Also interesting is that only two of these nine respondents were young men, mirroring the gender balance in the additional written comments. This may be because the young men's need to maintain their social reputations requires greater indifference to the behaviour of others. Equally, it may arise because young women's social reputations are more closely intertwined with a gendered discourse about the unacceptability of indiscipline (Padfield 2002) and, therefore, they are required to be seen to be upset by such behaviour. These nine young people were more likely to report 'never' being disruptive themselves, again reflecting the initial findings from the ESYTC (2002). All but one of those who reported feeling disrupted to this extent, reported being involved directly in some level of disruption themselves, although this was mostly minor and occasional. The numbers involved here are necessarily small and limit any generalisations which might be made, but it is interesting that the differences which separate these nine from the remaining 37 are not large or unequivocal and these young people only stand out very slightly from the larger group. Significantly, the remaining 37 young people were found to be both disrupted and disruptive.

*Are there differences in the experiences of young men and young women?*

Finally, the responses were also examined in terms of the gender of the participants and shown in Figure 5.4 below.



The data here act as an important reminder that most young people are only occasionally disruptive and then only in minor ways. In discussing the data it is borne in mind that the young women and men may have understood some of the questions differently, for example, the questions about 'remembering PE kit' might have very different connotations depending on concerns about body image (Davies 1989, Scottish Health Education Unit 2003), an issue for at least two of the young women .

The responses are striking. They reveal that young women are much more often disruptive than would be predicted from any in-school, local authority or national records on disruption and Exclusion. Support for these findings, however, is to be found in Stewart's small study (2002) but also in the large-scale and robust longitudinal survey being conducted by Smith (ESYTC 2003). This, then offers a new perspective on the commonly expressed view of male pupils that 'girls get away with it'. It refocusses discussions about gendered expectations of pupil behaviour and reinforces concern about disproportionate rates of male Exclusion.

It also seems to challenge previous findings from the Scottish School Leavers Survey: 17 in 97 (2000) and findings elsewhere in the ESYTC (2003) by suggesting that more young women than young men absent themselves from school without permission. Seven from 25 reported taking time off school occasionally or more often, compared with only two young men out of 21 who participated in the Behaviour Questionnaire. This difference was also implied by some of the discussion in the individual interviews. There is some evidence that patterns of absence for young women and young men are quite different. According to the ESYTC, girls 'stay home, while boys were more likely to hang around at parks or playing fields' (2002;132). Research by Malcolm *et al.* (1996;16) reports that 'explained absence rates were slightly higher for girls than boys' and this may assist in unravelling the seeming contradiction in the findings here and in previous studies. The question in the Behaviour Questionnaire asked, significantly, about 'skiving' not 'truancy'. I would suggest that these terms are not interchangeable in common usage and that young people may use local dialect phrases such as 'skiving' or 'dogging school' as



a respectable and flexible shorthand for non-attendance which might include personal or family reasons and which might later be covered by a letter from home. I suggest that by using a more informal term then, access is gained, therefore, to new data. Although 'skiving' may be an ambivalent term, it focusses attention on the need to understand non-attendance as a much more complex issue than truancy, and reinforces concern about links between low attainment and non-attendance for young women (Osler 2000, Biggart 2001).

### *Comparison of male/female perceptions of peer disruption*

As a corollary of the discussion about male and female involvement in disruption above, the data was also examined in terms of gendered perceptions of disruption caused by peers. The responses were very similar from all groups.

As might be expected, and possibly for reasons discussed earlier, more males in each group reported feeling 'not bothered' by disruption, although this was also the most common response by both young men and young women. Although a small number in total, approximately equal numbers of young women and men reported feeling 'seriously annoyed' in each group. Reporting that a behaviour was slightly unsettling, or 'put you off a bit' was higher each time for young women. Finally, the numbers who reported that a behaviour 'hadn't happened' was, again, an even balance of male and female. This is not to say that the same behaviours gave rise to these responses in each case, but it is interesting that again, given common expectations about different schools and their ethos and environment, there was such strong similarity across the groups in the overall pattern of response.

### *Behaviour Questionnaire Summary*

The findings from the Behaviour Questionnaires confirm that these young people have little direct involvement in the kinds of behaviour which constitute the most serious disruption. However, they also suggest that the generality of young people, across

different kinds of school, are more commonly involved in low-level disruption than would usually be assumed, and, in addition, that young women have much more direct involvement in disruption than expected. Commenting on the effects of disruptive behaviour by pupils around them, most of these young people expressed indifference. However, there were also clear indications that some typical behaviours were felt to be much more unsettling than others. Contrary to expectation, too, there was found to be little difference in the experience of the generality of young people across the four schools.

## **Summary**

The aim of the focus groups was to explore, directly with young people, the experience and meaning of exclusion for the generality of pupils in mainstream secondary schools. The questions guiding this exploration were outlined in the introduction of the chapter and centred on gaining an understanding of young people's views on the effects of disruption, on the processes of official Exclusion policy and practice, and on wider meanings of exclusion.

The focus groups were found to be a productive way in which to gain an understanding of how young people talk about these issues. The social interaction of the pre-formed groups provided a familiar context in which opinions were voiced, reflected and developed. These views were understood both as the discourses of pupils in schools and of young people reflecting on their identities as pupils in schools.

Issues of access and consent continued to permeate the analysis throughout this stage of the study, serving as an incisive set of questions about the meaning of the term 'generality' in the context of the four different school environments. Discussions with school staff, analysis of pupil records and the responses from the young people themselves confirm, however, that these young people can be said to represent a generality and therefore have a legitimate and distinct set of contributions to make to debates surrounding exclusion.

These contributions offer some clear indications of how these young people feel about indiscipline, disruption, and what may be best described as a sense of ‘turbulence’ in their schools. Counter to expectation, there was an equally broad spread of opinion and relatively little difference in views about the major issues across the four schools. It had been assumed that in schools known to have lower levels of disruption and higher attainment levels, the young people might express greater satisfaction with overall discipline. This was not found to be the case. Disruption is seen by the majority of these young people as a common and unwelcome feature of their educational experience. Many responses from each group indicated deep dissatisfaction with their school’s approaches to indiscipline. However, responses also revealed an unexpectedly widespread direct involvement in low-level disruption by the generality. These came from both male and, significantly, female pupils.

Additional written comments from some individual young people included references to disruptive behaviour affecting learning but there were also indications that school discipline and disruption were seen as part of a wider unease about some aspects of pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher relationships. The importance of reputation and its influence on outcomes was a recurring theme and featured at different points of the discussions, and raised by different groups. The variability of ‘getting caught’ was also noted. Discussion of wider meanings of exclusion was more limited, although all groups recognised a range of reasons which might lead to unauthorised absence from school and many emphasised the need for support for young people in difficult situations.

The prevalence of a sense of turbulence is significant, not least because it emerges from the responses of groups of pupils who are usually regarded as affected by disruption rather than causing it and thus also regarded as less likely to be prejudiced against the discipline system. However, the juxtaposition of the generality’s direct involvement in minor but persistent rule-breaking with such strong views on current discipline processes presents an uncomfortable paradox to those who would see ‘the disruptive’ and ‘the disrupted’ as two quite distinct groups. If the experience of these young people is also

the experience of the wider school populace then it confirms in part the legitimacy of policy concern about the effects of disruption on learning and social relationships in schools. However, by revealing the widespread involvement of the generality in rule-breaking, it places concerns about disruption within a much more demanding policy context. These responses require a new, much larger set of questions about schools and schooling.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Discussion

This study set out to explore aspects of exclusion from school which have, to date, been neglected by research in education. The study focused on the experience of exclusion both from the point of view of those excluded and from the viewpoint of the generality of pupils.

A review of the literature revealed the centrality of concerns about disruption, attendance and troublesome behaviour in current educational debate. It highlighted the large amount of data gathered in recent years, but also confirmed that if research is to claim a broader understanding of the experience of exclusion, significant gaps remain in this body of literature. The study grew out of this review of current literature and the researcher's own experience as a teacher with responsibility for the pastoral care of pupils of this age group. It identified three related sets of issues. Firstly there was a concern that although research suggested that Exclusion from school for unruly behaviour was a major, often central experience in young people's lives, its effectiveness and appropriateness were increasingly uncertain. Secondly, there was an awareness that the experience of exclusion was one shared by many more pupils than those officially Excluded from school for reasons associated with overtly challenging behaviour. Thirdly, there was recognition that the voice of young people as pupils in schools was, paradoxically, still largely absent from serious discussion of exclusion issues. This thesis asserted the need, therefore, for the views of young people to be included in a debate from which they have often been excluded in the past.

The study further asserted that too often the twin concerns, for the excluded and the generality, have been seen as entirely separate, the interest of different groups, and as

such having little or nothing to say about, or to, each other. This study asserted the validity of, but also the challenge offered by, exploring together the experiences of these groups of young people in schools. It did so in the context of an international 'retreat from welfare' (Hallett and Hazel 1998) and a new, much more legalistic, Guidance on Exclusion from school in Scotland (C8/03) which has seen the re-emergence of a clear demarcation between disrupted and disruptive pupils. The study was interested in Fraser's discussions of 'needs talk' (1989) based on Foucault's concept of 'need as a political instrument' (1977; 26) and how this permeates school responses to different groups of pupils. In Fraser's terms this comprises 'three moments....The first is 'the struggle to establish or deny the political status of a given need.... The second is the struggle over the interpretation of the need, the struggle for the power to define it and, so, to determine what would satisfy it. The third moment is the struggle over the satisfaction of the need, the struggle to secure or withhold provision' (1989;164). It is thus recognised that issues of exclusion from and in school have a cultural, political and historical context; that they are in this sense 'porous'. Particular attention was also drawn to Fullan's concern that education was trying to cope with the 'juxtaposition of a continuous *change* theme with a continuous *conservative* system' (1993;3). The aim of the study was to provide a new set of insights into the experiences of young people in these contexts; disrupted and disruptive, excluded and included, and thus to throw fresh light on a major issue for schools today.

The development of the framework of 'layers of exclusion' was in part a response to the need to define and bound the case in a study which consciously challenges the existing boundaries of the definition of exclusion in the school context. It was an attempt to conceptualise the relationship between 'needs talk' and the structural responses made by schools to behaviour issues. An analogy was drawn with Garland's discussion of the 'obscuring and reassuring effect of established institutions' and his concern that 'once a complex field of problems, needs and conflicts is built over by an institutional framework in this way, these problematic and often unstable foundations disappear from view' (1990;3-4). Stirling's suggestion that official Exclusion for indiscipline was the 'tip of the iceberg' (1992) was seen as a useful image; able to convey a sense of the potential

significance of hidden forms of exclusion, the possible dangers, threats and hidden injuries of less visible forms of marginalisation. The framework of 'layers of exclusion' was developed therefore as a basis for discussion, around which current perceptions and conceptions could be explored.

This discussion will not reiterate the findings of the research, but outlines the major questions raised by the study and the implications of these findings for a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding exclusion, as well suggesting possible directions for further research.

### **The Process Of Seeking Access And Consent With Schools**

In reflecting on the initial contacts with schools, the most striking features were an unexpected similarity in terms of one aspect of negotiating access, and an equally thought-provoking set of differences elsewhere. This similarity, as described earlier, was a common difficulty in identifying pupils at risk of official disciplinary Exclusion. I have explored some of the likely explanations for this, but suggest that it remains an intriguing and concerning area for further discussion. In terms of differences, the unforeseen complexity of the process of seeking access and consent with schools for this research, and the variability of the issues in each school, also came to be seen as important data in its own right within the study.

In planning the research, much thought had been given to the sensitive questions of access and consent with the research participants, but less to the question of access to schools. As the research was funded and supported by the local authority in which the study was to take place, this was felt to offer an advantageous starting position. That the research was to be conducted by a teacher with experience in this sector of education and specifically with vulnerable young people, seemed to consolidate this advantage.

Though this early assessment was to prove naïve, the difficulties experienced served to highlight a question about the relative influence of formal school structures and informal working relations within schools and how these relationships might permeate schools' interactions with their pupils and impact on the experience of young people in these schools. This question is explored later in the context of the findings from speaking with young people themselves. Earlier, attention was drawn to Holly's statement that there is an 'in-built opposition between democratically conceived research and hierarchically structured schools' (1984;9). This view was felt to offer some useful interpretation of the setbacks encountered by recognising structural barriers to sensitive research in a hierarchical school setting.

It suggested that, in some sense, such research is doomed from the start. However, in moving from the general to the particular, an important question remains. Holly cannot adequately account for the stark differences between schools on this question of access, when all share the same formal hierarchical structure. The schools where access and consent constituted less of an issue were high Excluding schools but were also schools where the researcher was personally known or vouched for by other school staff, and also where the professional history of the researcher indicated a commonality of interest, a sense of shared values at least with the guidance and management teams in those schools. Throughout the fieldwork, it was more difficult to gain access and establish good working relationships where I was not known personally and where my professional history may have seemed more unusual, less mainstream.

Although I can only speculate, it seems likely that not only the focus of the research but also the position of the researched in the local schools hierarchy and the position of the researcher all contributed to the differences found between schools on this issue. On the one hand, this may be seen to validate the importance of human relationships and the development of trust, long recognised as an essential feature of successful qualitative research. On the other hand, relative ease of access to pupils in high Excluding schools may also have resulted from these schools' assumptions that the research was likely to 'prove' to the local authority the worth of their work in difficult circumstances. For the



low Excluding schools, conversely, the research may have been seen as a threat and challenge to their overall autonomy and specifically the support given to more vulnerable, less academically successful pupils in their academically successful schools.

This threat is understood as complex. The very features initially identified as advantageous to the research, then, may also have been perceived as a threat and a danger to the status quo for these latter schools. This helps to interpret the way in which the low Excluding schools called upon the discourse of the vulnerable child in need of protection; their argument about the need for protection of pupils which was also revealed as effective protection from unwanted scrutiny for the adults working with them. The malleability of this argument about protection or perhaps more properly, protectionism, resonates with questions about 'needs talk' (Fraser 1989) and professional perceptions of the distance between the experiences of the excluded and the generality of pupils. It re-emphasises the need to consider Hayden's suggestion that exclusion is not 'an inevitable consequence to a particular set of events, but [as] a product of a set of events dealt with in a particular way' (1997;10). It suggests the need for continued caution and awareness of the multi-layered meanings of sensitivity in school-based research in general.

All of these aspects of the process of seeking access and consent with schools, then, were seen to be significant in themselves and also significant in that they helped to ground the data as it emerged from direct contact with the young people in these schools.

### **Seeking Access And Consent With Young People**

In view of the difficulties encountered with achieving access to schools for study, it is interesting to note the relative ease with which most young people themselves accepted the research without question. Although useful in terms of the smooth progress of the fieldwork, this contrast also confirms earlier concerns about the intrinsic difficulty of achieving informed, active consent with young people as pupils in schools. This raises a question both for further qualitative school-based research and for schools themselves.

For research, it suggests the need for continued consideration and development of ways to seek the views of young people which acknowledge the importance of power differentials. I suggest that these power differentials exist between adults and young people in school but also within young people themselves. In their struggle for a comfortable identity, and as they move between home, school and community, they are understood to have different understandings of their own sense of agency.

For schools, it makes imperative the need to examine an apparent paradox. A statement of formal aims in any school prospectus will speak of the need to build self-confident, independent citizens equipped to make their own informed decisions. It is time to consider whether, despite these laudable aims, young people are so disempowered by school systems of regulation and control that the notion of self-efficacy is seen as irrelevant in respect of involvement in research within a school setting.

The opportunity to speak at length was perhaps seized so readily, despite the inarticulacy of many, because it happens so rarely within school. Certainly, most of the young people, both in the focus groups and in the individual interviews, referred repeatedly to the importance of personal contact with adults, to the need for listening and talking. However, this raises a larger question about the espoused aims of schooling and a contrast with schooling as a lived experience in these different schools. While the recent emphasis on children's rights in school and the welcome growth of interest in education for citizenship respond to some of these same concerns, it is clear that many of these young people have yet to feel the full benefits of learning in a democratic school with a truly participatory ethos.

### **The Data Collection Process**

The tension between a belief in the capacity of young people to make valuable contributions to knowledge and an awareness that the school situation may not always be conducive to the development of constructive personal reflection was seen to have important methodological implications. The design of the study itself sought therefore to

be inclusive, to provide an innovative range of opportunities for individual and group participation, for active and more sedentary theme-based tasks and for both written and oral contributions. The two main methods of data collection, the interviews and focus groups, were used quite separately in this study. This is not seen as essential and indeed it was clear from participants' comments that some young people would have been willing to meet individually having been in a focus group, but also that some would have liked to join a group for further discussion, having been involved in a one-to-one interview. It was perhaps unfortunate that time constraints prevented this happening here. Overall, the different methods seemed to offer equally valuable effective tools for data gathering. Despite their differences, but perhaps because each sought to respect and value the contributions made, both approaches seemed to appeal to the research participants. The interviews offered opportunities to explore individual issues in a depth which would have been difficult in the larger groups, but, as suggested earlier, one of the strengths of the focus group approach was the opportunity to listen to and explore pupil discourses as well as the intersection of individual and group concerns. The difficulties of tape recording have been noted but there remains a need to develop approaches which allow research to study process and interactions more closely. The tangible sense of enjoyment and resultant sense of expansiveness seen in some of the groups suggests some groupwork approaches to data collection may translate well into the individual interview situation. In contrast with the very limited success of attempts to seek respondent validation with the interview participants, respondent validation in the focus groups was seen to work particularly well as a tool for reflection and further development of ideas among the young people.

## **The Main Findings**

In terms of the data which emerged directly from the meetings with young people, there were five key areas in which the views of the research participants impact directly on current knowledge about issues surrounding exclusion. The issues which emerged within talk of official Exclusion and disruption are clearly of major interest, but draw their

significance from broader discussions about friendship, 'work', achievement and aspirations.

There was confirmation that official Exclusion associated with overtly challenging behaviour was seen as a very serious process by nearly all the young people. School managers may feel that such a view, expressed by those who have been Excluded and also by some who have not, validates the continued use of this sanction. However, it was also found that most young people, irrespective of direct involvement in the Exclusion process, regarded official Exclusion as entirely ineffective or only partially effective, and sometimes counter-productive. It is interesting that this, and many of the most important findings were consistent across all four schools, across each 'layer of exclusion', both for excludees and the generality of pupils, and among male and female pupils. It should be of immediate concern to schools that a central, long-established part of the school discipline process is seen simultaneously as significant and yet ineffective. It seems likely that experience of this paradox must affect pupils' engagement with the broader priorities of schools in terms of discipline. There is, therefore, a need for a measured re-appraisal of the aims and use of this sanction of last resort.

Related to this specific question about Exclusion as part of the discipline system in these schools, there emerged a clear consensus about failings within the discipline system in general. Most of the young people, whatever their relationship with school, and regardless of school attended, were dissatisfied with their school discipline system. Procedures for checking attendance, for example, were seen as typical of poorly managed school systems, particularly by those who admitted missing school. It may be argued that young people of this age might object to any constraints on their behaviour. However, it was notable that young people's objections were most often not to the use of Exclusion *per se* but to its overuse, its sometimes inappropriate use and to its perceived lack of effectiveness in many cases. Similarly, the objection to their school's discipline system was to its perceived lack of consistency and effectiveness, not to the need for its existence. Indeed, the call for teachers to be more strict was noted in many of the responses from these research participants and echoes findings of previous research. The



unanimity and strength of these views about discipline are all the more powerful because the young people were so positive about other aspects of their schools; because those who contributed their views included groups of pupils seen as more 'settled' and engaged with school; and because these views come from pupils in such a broad range of schools. I suggest that there is much to learn from their explorations of these issues and how these might usefully offer comment on current reductionist concepts of 'authority' and 'discipline' in schools. Their open and flexible interpretations of these concepts open up possibilities for different kinds of relationships in schools that impact on teaching and learning, on relations between teachers and between teachers and pupils. It is interesting to consider how approaches to data collection adopted in the focus groups and the changes suggested by the young people in these groups might, if used more widely, also impact on the problematic area of peer relationships highlighted by this study.

Young people's views on Alternatives to Exclusion are also seen as raising urgent questions for schools. It was reassuring to find that some vulnerable young people had a clear idea of the range of supports available in and around school, and that they felt able to approach individual adults with their concerns. However, this knowledge seemed much greater in the two high Excluding schools than in the low Excluding schools. While this may be partly related to a higher level of resources in the former schools, it nevertheless has implications for the troubled and troublesome pupils in the low Excluding schools. Though perhaps fewer in number, their difficulties are not necessarily less complex nor are they in less need of support. Of equal concern was the complete lack of talk by any young person, in any of the four schools, about inter-agency groups, the Pupil Support Groups (PSGs), which are seen by the local authority as central to its provision for vulnerable pupils. Whilst acknowledging the huge amount of hard work undertaken by the PSGs, there must be concern that young people and those with a duty of care for them have such different terms of reference for the meaning of 'support'. To continue to ignore the significance of this disjunction would imply a disregard for the views of young people in decisions affecting them directly.

In the same way, and just as importantly, the young people involved in this research had some new and very pertinent comments to make about their perceptions and experiences of disruption in general. From the interviews with excluded young people, there was evidence that disruption is not, as school management would have it, always seen as a negative experience. These young people described its effects in much more complex terms. Most did not like 'mucking about' but most also suggested that disruption was sometimes desirable or acceptable and sometimes not, depending on their own individual priorities and interests or the severity of the disruptive behaviour. This finding did not vary with school, with gender or, interestingly, whether a young person was disruptive her or himself.

The generality of pupils also offered much useful comment on this issue. Most reported that disruptive behaviour had little effect on them, it did not 'bother' them, though some particular behaviours did give rise to strong comment. This contrasted with comments made by many of the interview participants who reported feeling affected by a range of unsettled behaviours. It may be that even when responding individually and privately, young people felt a need to present themselves as indifferent to disruption, especially when the language was offered to them in this way. However, it is also possible that the results may point to a contrast with the effects of disruption on more vulnerable, marginalised pupils. Further research would be required to explore this more fully.

As expected, the generality of pupils was not often involved in serious disruptive behaviour. Surprisingly, however, all four school groups reported much higher than predicted involvement in minor disruption; the kinds of low level disruption which research (Johnstone and Munn 1997) has suggested teachers find most difficult to tackle. Furthermore, female involvement in this low level disruption was found to be at a much higher level than would be predicted from local and national statistics on Exclusion. Considered together with some of the individual discussions with female pupils about their involvement in physical violence, this may call into question widespread and powerful conceptions of disruption as a primarily male phenomenon associated with working class rejection of school. It suggests that such conceptions may offer a restricted

understanding of the disruptive behaviour of both young women and young men. In the context of increasing public and media concern about the prevalence of 'girl gangs' in the UK, this also suggests the need to consider more closely whether there is in fact a change in female behaviour as such or an increased female visibility allied to a shift in thinking about the sources of threats to moral order.

More generally, the finding that the generality of pupils is involved in low-level disruptive behaviour provides evidence that most pupils in these high and low Excluding schools are both disrupted and disruptive to some extent and thereby challenges a popular discourse in schools about 'good' and 'bad' pupils and the distance between the two. This finding strengthens the argument for re-examination of recently introduced Guidance on Exclusion in Scotland (C8/03) which presumes and emphasises the distinctions between these groups of pupils. More broadly, it offers a contribution to current debates about youth justice and child welfare in Scotland by revealing the complexity of the links between settled and troubled and troublesome pupil behaviour. The arguments made by those who advocate more punitive responses to difficult behaviour are often based on a concern that a small troublesome minority have undue detrimental impact on the lives of the settled majority of pupils. The findings from this study do not contradict the suggestion that this minority exists, but they do suggest the prevalence of a 'transfer of risk from the collective to the individual' (Levitas 1998:4); a 'reprivatisation' discourse (Fraser 1989) which may result in a fundamental misrepresentation of what is actually happening in schools.

This same complexity was apparent in discussions about attendance and non-attendance at school. Missing school was often seen as a valid response to difficulty, especially when the difficulty related to worries about bullying or family issues. Although sometimes scathing of school monitoring procedures for attendance, as noted earlier, there was a general acceptance among all young people involved in the research of the need for regular attendance and an awareness of the problems associated with missing lessons or a whole school day. Despite the progress made in tackling bullying in schools, however, it still seems that pupils have less trust than might be expected in the capacity

of schools to respond effectively to this issue, except where it involves open physical assault or verbal confrontation. It may be obvious, but is still worth repeating, that teachers tend to see disruptive behaviour as the major problem in school, while research with pupils has repeatedly emphasised their concerns about peer difficulties. The links made by young people between personal issues and attendance reveal a pragmatism which is at variance with, and may be understood as resistance to, schools' increasingly strict regulation and control of absence and attendance. Issues of attendance may therefore provide a useful focus for further exploration of the balance of structure and agency in school relations.

Although more tentative than some of the findings, it is also important to note the evidence which suggests that more young women may be missing school than school records suggest. Attention was drawn earlier to the finding by Osler *et al.* (2002) that girls adapt more readily to the academic demands of schooling. This notion of 'adaptability' may, however, underestimate the agency of female pupils in this regard. Foucault's notion of the capillary, arborescent nature of power (Allan 2003) may be useful in exploring the extent to which young women in school may have a stronger than acknowledged comprehension of schools' systems in general and therefore capacity to manipulate these to their own needs. This also raises a question about the link between possible hidden absences and more covert forms of bullying and difficulties in peer relations often perceived to be more common among young women. It raises a further challenge to the over-representation of young men in the official Exclusion statistics.

I noted earlier that this concern about peer difficulties in school was sometimes painfully apparent in the meetings with individual young people and their reflections on personal friendships. Their very silences gave rise to concern about the vulnerability and uncertainties of these young people in their search for a workable identity in school, revealed as a consuming, often contradictory process. Again, these responses were similar from young women and young men, across the low and high Excluding schools and regardless of the nature of their exclusion. The reticence and the prevalence of this reticence was emphasised by an unexpected openness in other areas. It was noted that no



question asked directly about learning difficulties but a large proportion of the young people volunteered information about their own difficulties. Likewise, no question sought information about health issues within the family of the young person and yet some very personal information was offered. This wariness or reticence about peer relations also stands in sharp contrast to the high proportion of very positive and warm comments made by these same young people about individual teachers. This was the area of discussion which proved most sensitive across all the interviews, and also one of the most revealing.

So, too, discussions with individual young people about school work, achievement and aspirations revealed a confusion and uncertainty which are of great concern. Gentle probing revealed that many of these young people had experienced successes across a number of spheres and within the formal and informal curriculum of schools and beyond school. However, they generally found it very difficult to 'own' these successes and, on the rare occasion where an academic success was discussed, this reticence was even more apparent. Nearly all of these pupils had very limited personal expectations in comparison with the majority of Scotland's young people (Machin 2003) and it was interesting, then, to find that despite their difficulties in school, many still attempted to engage with the demands of the work as well as the relationships on offer in school.

It seemed that the tenor of response to questions about ambitions and future plans, this poverty of expectation among these marginalized young people, had many parallels with broader discussions about change with all research participants. It is interesting that direct questions about desirable changes in schools were met with such muted response. Reference was made earlier to Lahelma's comments on a similar set of responses to questions about change in school from a group of similarly aged young people in Finland; that they wanted 'less homework, shorter school days – less but not different' (2002;371). The contrast with the creative, vividly realised alternatives to current models of teaching and learning offered by thousands of younger pupils in *The Guardian's* survey (2001) must give cause for considered thought. If the differences lie even partly in the priority traditionally afforded to creativity and experiential learning in UK primary schools, and

the possible effects of more inflexible, exam-driven systems in secondary education, then there may be important implications for the secondary sector.

This seeming lack of interest in possibilities for change may be understood as the success of education's attempts to 'defuse and depoliticise [the] potentially explosive class relations' (Blyth and Milner 1994;301). It may also be understood as a consequence of the 'juxtaposition of continuous *change* theme with a continuous *conservative* system' (Fullan 1993). Fullan's ideas may most often be interpreted as affecting those working in education, but may also apply to those learning – in every sense of the word – within that education system. These structural considerations are seen to be held in balance, or as Giddens would have it 'mitigated' (1981) by human agency, as evidenced in this study, for example, through the warmth of remarks about individual teachers made by young people across all four schools. As I return to this finding once more, I suggest that it speaks of a capacity and willingness by many adults and pupils to build and maintain positive relationships in schools, in spite of, rather than because of, the formal structures they find there. It answers perhaps some of the concerns raised about the possible impact of adult contestations of power on the experiences of pupils. It reinforces the relevance of the focus in this thesis on the experiences of young people who may be on the margins but who are not beyond the margins of mainstream schools. It challenges common assumptions about the effects of being a pupil in low or high Excluding schools by revealing concerns about disruption and school discipline to be common to many pupils across a range of schools.

## **Concluding Comments**

The framework of 'layers of exclusion' has allowed exploration of the patterns of similarity and difference between different young people regarded as excluded in some sense of the term. It has thus revealed the experiences of those excluded to have much more in common with each other than expected. It has set these findings alongside those from discussions on similar themes with pupils regarded as a generality in each of these

schools. The striking similarity between the experiences and expressed views of excluded pupils and that generality give rise to a call for reconsideration of the dichotomy between the excluded and included, the disruptive and disrupted, and highlight the need for much more open and reflexive examination of current policy on discipline and disruption.

The importance of peer relations, noted in previous studies and revealed in detail within this research, is clearly central but often a problematic aspect of school experience for many pupils. Schools' lack of recognition of the importance of pupils' social relationships, I suggest, has had serious implications for adult/pupil relations in general. It sets up a tension between adult and pupil concerns which may help to explain the prevalence of low-level indiscipline. I suggest that attempts to improve discipline systems in schools will benefit greatly by acknowledging the legitimacy of pupil concerns alongside those of adults and by seeking opportunities to consider teacher and pupil priorities together.

Related to this, but also important in its own right, the findings of this research suggest that schools must continue to seek much more regular and more effective ways of ensuring that young people's views are valued within school, and within a culture which values the views of all within that community. This is not to suggest that young people should have ultimate control. There are decisions which must remain the responsibility of those trained and paid to take responsibility. However, there is a need to translate the aims stated in many school prospectuses into a reality for many more pupils and to continue to seek ways to acknowledge and build on the wide range of abilities and capacities pupils develop across the formal and informal curriculum.

Finally, there is a need to consider how best to respond to the finding that many marginalized young people continue to value school work and academic achievement and attainment, often despite major difficulties related in school. This is understood to mark both the success of attempts to support young people in difficulty and the need to continue to do so. I suggest that particular care needs to be taken to ensure that legitimate

attempts to adapt the curriculum to suit individual need do not neglect the responsibility of schools to challenge a poverty of expectation.

By basing the research in four different schools, and through the discovery, against a range of measures, that pupils in these schools had more in common with each other than might be predicted, a question has also been raised about the relationship between the experience of being a pupil in a particular school and that of being a pupil *per se*.

Although this study was interested in gathering information on a range of different experiences it has also revealed a commonality of experience in some significant areas. Emerging from these personal accounts, then, is a new range of questions to be asked of school practices, the relationships between schools and their pupils, and of current perceptions of excludees and the generality of pupils.



## Bibliography

- Advisory Centre on Education (2001) *Exclusion Project Update*, *ACE Bulletin* (104); 16.
- Alderson, P. (1999) Disturbed young people: research for what, research for whom? in S. Robb, B. Mayall and S. Oliver (eds.) *Critical Issues in Social Research : Power and Prejudice*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Allan, J. (1999) *Actively Seeking Inclusion: Pupils with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools*, Falmer Press, London.
- Allan, J. and I'Anson, J. (2003) Children's rights in school: assemblies and assemblages, paper presented to seminar *Challenging 'Social Inclusion'; Perspectives for and from young people*, Strathclyde University, Glasgow.
- Armstrong, C., Hill, M. and Secker, J. (2000) Young people's perceptions of mental health in *Children and Society* **14**: 60-72.
- Audit Commission (1996) *Misspent Youth: Young People and Crime*, HMSO, London.
- Ball, S., Bowe, R. and Gewirtz, S. (1997) Circuits of schooling; a sociological exploration of parental choice of school in social-class contexts, in A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A.S. Wells, (eds.) *Education: Culture, Economy and Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Ballard, K. (1995) Inclusion, Paradigms, Power and Participation, in C. Clark, Dyson, A. and Millward, A. (eds.) *Towards Inclusive Schools?* David Fulton, London.
- Barbour, R.S. and Kitzinger, J. (1999) *Developing Focus Group Research: Policy, Theory and Practice*, Sage, London.
- Barnardo's (2000) *Back to School?* Barnardo's, Edinburgh.
- Barton, L. and Meighan, R. (eds.)(1979), *Schools, Pupils and Deviance*, Nafferton Books, Nafferton.
- Bassey, M. (1999) *Case Study Research in Educational Settings*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Baumeister, R. (1986) *Identity, Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Baumrind, D. (1991) Effective parenting during the early adolescent transition in P. A. Cowan and M. Hetherington, (eds.) *Family Transitions*, Hillsdale, Lawrence Erlbaum, New Jersey.
- Bechhofer, F. and Paterson, L. (2000) The choice of locale and group, in *Principles of Research Design*, Routledge, London.
- Bendle, M. (2002) The crisis of 'identity' in high modernity, in *British Journal of Sociology*, 53 (1); 1-18.
- Bernstein, B. (1990) *The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse: Vol IV; Class, codes and control*, Routledge, London.
- Biggart, A. (2001) *Scottish School Leavers : Gender and Low Achievement*, Scottish Executive, Education Department Research Unit, Edinburgh.
- Bird, L. (1999) *The Fundamental Facts*, Mental Health Foundation, London.
- Birkett, D. (2001) The school we'd like, in *The Guardian*, 5th June 2002, p2-3.
- Blatchford, P. and Sharp, S. (1994) *Breaktime and the School; understanding and changing playground behaviour*, Routledge, London.
- Blishen, E. (ed.) (1969) *The School That I'd Like*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Blyth, E. and Milner, J. (1994) Exclusion from School and Victim Blaming in *Oxford Review of Education*, 20 (3): 293-306.
- Bogdan, R. and Biklen, S. (1982) *Qualitative Research in Education*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston.
- Booth, T. (1996) Stories of Exclusion, in E. Blyth and J. Milner (eds.) *Exclusion from School; inter-professional issues for policy and practice*, Routledge, London.
- Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (1998) *From Them to Us*, Routledge, London.
- Borland, M., Hill, M., Laybourn, A. and Stafford, A. (2001) *Improving Consultation with Children and Young People in Relevant Aspects of Policy-making and Legislation in Scotland*, University of Glasgow and Children 1st, Edinburgh.
- Boswell, G. (1995) *Violent Victims; the prevalence of abuse and loss in the lives of Section 53 offenders*, The Prince's Trust, London.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997) The forms of capital, in A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A.S. Wells, (eds.) *Education: Culture, Economy and Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Bowles, S. and Gintis, H. (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Boyle, M.E., Pitts, M.K., Phillips, K.C., White, D.G. Clifford and Woollett, E.A. (1989) Exploring young people's attitudes to and knowledge of Aids - the value of focused group discussions, *Health Education Journal*, 48 (1): 21-23.
- Brandes, D. and Norris, J. (1998) *The Gamester's Handbook 3*, Stanley Thornes, Cheltenham.
- Bridgeland, M. (1971) *Pioneer Work with Maladjusted Children*, Granada, London.
- British Educational Research Association (2003) *Draft Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, British Educational Research Association.
- Brown, P., Halsey, A. H., Lauder, H., and Wells, A. S. (1997) The transformation of education and society: an introduction, in A. H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A. S. Wells (eds.), *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Brown, S. and McIntyre, D. (1993) *Making Sense of Teaching*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Bryce, T. G. K. and Humes, W. H. (eds.) (1999) *Scottish Education*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Burman, E. (1994) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*, Routledge, London.
- Burton, D. (ed.) (2000) *Research Training for Social Scientists*, Sage, London.
- Calinescu, M. (1987) *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Post-modernism*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Campbell, A. (1991) *The Girls in the Gang*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Canter L. and Canter, M. (1992) *Assertive Discipline*, Lee Canter Associates, Santa Monica.
- Carbonaro, W. and Gamoran, A. (2002) *The Production of Achievement Inequality in High School English*, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Carlen, P., Gleeson, D. and Wardhaugh, J. (1992) *Truancy: the Politics of Compulsory Schooling*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Centre for the Child and Society (undated) *Code of Practice for Research involving Children*, University of Glasgow, Glasgow.

Chaplain, R. (1996) Making a strategic withdrawal: disengagement and self-worth protection in male pupils in J. Rudduck, Chaplain, R. and G. Wallace, *School Improvement, What can pupils tell us*, David Fulton, London.

Chazan, M. (1994) The attitudes of mainstream teachers towards pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in *European Journal of Special Needs*, 9(3);261-275.

Chesney-Lind, M. (1997) *The Female Offender: Girls, Women and Crime*, Sage, London.

Children Act (1989), HMSO, London.

Children (Scotland) Act (1995), Scottish Office, Edinburgh.

Christiansen, C. and Rizvi, F. (eds.) (1996) *Disability and the Dilemmas of Education and Justice*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Cicourel, A. V. (1964) *Method and Measurement in Sociology*, The Free Press, New York.

Clough, P. and Barton, L. (eds.) (1995) *Making Difficulties: Research and the Construction of Special Educational Needs*, Paul Chapman, London.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000) *Research Methods in Education*, Routledge/Falmer, London.

Cohen, R., Hughes M., Ashworth, L. and Blair, M. (1994) *School's Out*, Barnardo's, London.

Cole, M. (ed.) (2000) *Education, Equality and Human Rights*, Routledge/Falmer, London.

Collins, J. (1996) *The Quiet Child*, Cassell, London.

Connell, R.W., Ashenden, D.J., Kessler, S. and Dowsett, G.W. (1982) *Making the Difference; Schools, Families and Social Division*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

Cooper, P. (1999) Changing perceptions of EBD: maladjustment, EBD and beyond, in *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 4 (1), 3-11.

Cooper, P. and McIntyre, D. (1996) *Effective Teaching and Learning: teachers' and students' perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Buckingham.



Cooper, P. and McIntyre, D. (1993) Commonality in teachers' and pupils' perceptions of effective classroom teaching, in *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 63; 381-399.

Cooper, P. and Upton, G. (1990) an ecosystemic approach to emotional and behavioural difficulties, in *Educational Psychology*, 8 (4):301-321.

Courtney, G. (2000) *17 in '97: The Experiences of Scotland's 16-17 year olds in 1997*, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.

Craib, I. (1997) *Classical Social Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Crozier, J. and Antiss J. (1995) Out of the spotlight: girls' experience of disruption in J. Lloyd-Smith and R. Davies (eds.) *On the Margins: the educational experience of 'problem pupils'*, Trentham, Stoke.

Croxford, L. (2003) Changes in the context of schooling in England, Wales and Scotland since 1984, paper for British Educational Research Association Conference, Heriot-Watt, Edinburgh.

Cullen, M. A., Johnstone M., Lloyd, G. and Munn, P. (1996) *Exclusions from School and Alternatives*, Moray House, Edinburgh.

Cullingford, C. and Morrison, J. (1996) Who excludes whom? The personal experience of exclusion, in E. Blyth and J. Milner (eds.) *Exclusion from School; Interprofessional Issues for Policy and Practice*, Routledge, London.

Demie, F. (2002) Pupil mobility and educational achievement: an empirical analysis, in *Educational Research* 44(2): 197-215.

Department for Education (1994) *The Education of Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, C9/94, DFE, London.

Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Social Inclusion: Pupil support* (C10/99), London.

Department for Education and Science (2001) *Permanent Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals 1999/2000*.

Department for Education and Science (1989) *Discipline in Schools* (The Elton Report), HMSO, London.

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Pupil Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals, England 2001/2002*, SFR 16/2003.

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Trends in Education and Skills: absence and exclusion*.

Department for Education and Skills (2002) *Pupil Absence in Schools in England 2001/02*, SFR 30/2002.

de Pear, S. and Garner P. (1996) Tales from the exclusion zone: the views of teachers and pupils, in E. Blyth and J. Milner (eds.) *Exclusion from School; inter-professional issues for policy and practice*, Routledge, London.

Devlin, A. (1996) *Absent from School; Truancy and Exclusion*, King's College, London.

Dobson, J. and Henthorne, M. (1999) *Pupil Mobility in Schools; interim report*, DfEE, London.

Duffield, J., Allan, J., Turner E. and Morris, B. (2000) Pupils' voices on achievement: an alternative to the standards agenda, *Cambridge Journal of Education* 30(2); 263-273.

Durkheim, E. (1933) *The Division of Labour in Society*, Collier-Macmillan, London.

Durkheim, E. (1973) *Moral Education*, Collier-Macmillan, London.

Dyson, A. (1998) Professional intellectuals from powerful groups: wrong from the start? in P. Clough and L. Barton (eds.), *Articulating with Difficulty: Research Voices in Inclusive Education*, Paul Chapman, London.

Dyson, A. (1997) Social and educational disadvantage: reconnecting special needs education, in *British Journal of Special Education*, 24(4), 152-157.

Edward, S. and Malcolm, H. (2002) The Causes and Effects of Truancy, *SCRE Newsletter* (71):10-11.

Emirbayer, M. and Mische, A. (1998) What is agency? in *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4); 962-1119.

Epstein, D. (1998) 'Are you a girl or are you a teacher?' The least adult role in research about gender and sexuality in a primary school, in G. Walford (ed.) *Doing Research about Education*, Falmer Press, London.

Farrell, P. and Tsakalidou, K. (1999) Recent trends in the re-integration of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in the UK, in *School Psychology International*, 20(4); 323-337.

Fletcher-Campbell, F. (2001) Issues of inclusion, in *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 6 (2): 69-89.

Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality* (R. Hurley, trans.) Pantheon, New York.

- Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish* (A. Sheridan, trans.), Pantheon, New York.
- France, A. (2000) *Youth Researching Youth: The Triumph and Success Peer Research Project*, National Youth Agency, Youth Work Press, London.
- Frankland, J. and Bloor, M. (1999) Some issues arising in the systematic analysis of focus group materials, in Barbour, R.S and Kitzinger, J. (eds.) (1999) *Developing Focus Group Research: Policy, Theory and Practice*, Sage, London.
- Fraser, N. (1989) *Unruly Practices*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Frost, L. (2003) Doing bodies differently? Gender, youth, appearance and damage, in *Journal of Youth Studies*, 6 (1); 53-71.
- Fulcher, G. (1989) *Disabling Policies? A comparative approach to education policy and disability*, Falmer Press, London.
- Fullan, M. (1993) *Change Forces*, Falmer Press, London.
- Furlong, V. J. (1991) Disaffected pupils: reconstructing the sociological perspective, in *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 12(3): 293-307.
- Furlong, V.J. (1985) *The Deviant Pupil*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
- Gambe, D., Gomes J., Kapur, V., Rangel, M. and Stubbs, P. (1992) *Improving Practice with Children and Families*, Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, London.
- Garland, D. (1990) *Punishment and Modern Society: A Study in Social Theory*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Garner, P. (1995) Schools by scoundrels: the views of 'disruptive' pupils in mainstream schools in England and the United States in J. Lloyd-Smith and R. Davies (eds.) *On the Margins: the educational experience of 'problem pupils'*, Trentham, Stoke.
- Geertz, C. (1993) Thick description: towards an interpretative theory of culture, in C. Geertz (ed.) *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York.
- Geertz, C. (ed.) (1993) *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York.
- Giddens, A. (1981) Agency, institution and time-space analysis. in K. Knorr-Cetina and A. V. Cicourel (eds.), *Advances in social theory and methodology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Gillborn, D. and Youdell, D. (2000) *Rationing Education: Policy, Practice and Equity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Giroux, H. (1997) Crossing the boundaries of educational discourse, in A. H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A. S. Wells (eds.), *Education: Culture, Economy, Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Gitlin, A. and Russell, R. (1994) Alternative methodologies and the research context in A. Gitlin (ed.) *Power and Method: Political Activism and Educational Research*, Routledge, New York.
- Glennerster, H. (1998) Tackling poverty at its roots?, in C. Oppenheim (ed.) *An Inclusive Society, Strategies for Tackling Poverty*, Institute for Public Policy Research, London.
- Goffman, E. (1959) The moral career of the mental patient, in *Psychiatry* 22.
- Goodwin, R.E. and Petit, P. (eds.) (1995) *A Companion to Contemporary Philosophy*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Gordon, A. (2001) School exclusions in England: children's voices and adult solutions, in *Educational Studies* 27(1); 69-85.
- Gordon, J. and Grant, W. (eds.) (1997) *How We Feel*, Jessica Kingsley, London.
- Gow, L. and McPherson, A. (eds.) (1980) *Tell Them From Me*, Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen.
- Green J, and Hart, L. (1999) The impact of context on data, in R.S. Barbour and J. Kitzinger (eds.) *Developing Focus Group Research: Policy, Theory and Practice*, Sage, London.
- Griffin, A. (1993) *Representations of Youth: the Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Guba, E. G. (1990) *The Paradigm Dialog*, Sage, London.
- Gutting, G. (ed.) (1994) *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Hakim, C. (1987) *Research Design*, Allen and Unwin, London.
- Hallett, C. and Hazel, N. (1998) *The Evaluation of Children's Hearings in Scotland, Vol.2, The International Context: Trends in Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare*, Scottish Office Central Research Unit, Edinburgh.
- Halsey, A.H., Lauder, H., Brown, P. and Wells, A. S (eds.) (1997) *Education; Culture, Economy and Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.



- Hamill, P. and Boyd, B. (2002) Equality, fairness and rights: the young person's voice, in *British Journal of Special Education* 29(3): 111-117.
- Hammersley, M. (2003) Can and should educational research be educative? in *Oxford Review of Education* 29(1): 3-23.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1989) *Ethnography: principles and practice*, Routledge, London.
- Harden, J., Scott, S. (2000) Can't Talk, Won't Talk' Methodological issues in Researching Children, in *Sociological Research online* 5(2, <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/5/2/harden.html>).
- Hargreaves, D. (1979) Durkheim, deviance and education in L. Barton and R. Meighan (eds.), *Schools, Pupils and Deviance*, Nafferton Books, Nafferton.
- Harlen, W. and Malcolm, H. (1997) *Setting and Streaming: A Research Review*, SCRE, Edinburgh.
- Hatcher, R. (2000) Social Class and School in M. Cole (ed.) *Education, Equality and Human Rights*, Routledge/Falmer, London.
- Hayden, C. (2001) *Outside Looking In*, University of Portsmouth Advisory Centre for Education and Children's Society, Portsmouth.
- Hayden, C. (1997) *Children Excluded from Primary School*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Hayden, C., Lawrence, J., and Stepien, D. (2000) *Supporting Schools, Supporting Families*. Portsmouth.
- Hayden, C. and Martin, T. (1998) 'Safer Cities' and exclusion from school, in *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1(3); 315-330.
- Hayton, A. (ed.) (1999) *Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion*, Kogan Page, London.
- Hendrick, H. (1994) *Child Welfare: England 1872-1989*, Routledge, London.
- Hewitt, R., Epstein, D., Leonard, D. and Watkins, C. (2000) *The violence-resilient school: a comparative study of schools and their environments.*, University of London, London.
- Hill, M., Laybourn, A. and Borland, A. (1996) Engaging with primary-aged children about their emotions and well-being: methodological considerations, in *Children and Society* 10:129-144.

HMI (1990) *Choosing With Care: A Report on the Provision for Pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties*, Scottish Office Education Department, Edinburgh.

Hitchcock, G. and Hughes, D. (1995) *Research and the Teacher : A Qualitative Introduction to School-based Research*, 2nd edition, Routledge, London.

Hodgson, A. (1999) Analysing education and training policies in A. Hayton (ed.) *Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion*, Kogan Page Ltd, London.

Holly, P. (1984) The institutionalization of action-research in schools, in *Cambridge Journal of Education* 14(2): -17.

Hood, S., Kelley, P. and Mayall, B. (1996) Children as research subjects: a risky enterprise, in *Children and Society* 10:117-128.

Imich, A. (1994) Exclusions from school, current trends and issues, in *Educational Research* 36(1); 3-11.

Jackson, C. and Warin, J. (2000) The importance of gender as an aspect of identity at key transition points in compulsory education, in *British Educational Research Journal* 26(3);75-391.

James, A. and Prout, A. (eds.) (1997) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, FalmerPress, London.

John, P. (1996) Damaged goods? An interpretation of excluded pupils' perceptions of schooling, in E. Blyth and J. Milner (eds.) *Exclusion from School: Interprofessional Issues for Policy and Practice*, Routledge, London.

Johnstone, M. and Munn, P. (1997) *Indiscipline: A Survey of Scottish Primary School and Secondary School Teachers*, Moray House, Edinburgh.

Jordan, E. (1998) *Travellers and Scottish Education*. Ph.D. thesis, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh.

Kelly, E. (1994) Racism and sexism in the playground in P. Blatchford & S. Sharp (eds.) *Breaktime and the School: understanding and changing playground behaviour*, Routledge, London.

Kemmis, S. (1980) The imagination of the case and the invention of the study, in H. Simons (ed.) *Towards a Science of the Singular*, University of East Anglia, Norwich.

Kendall, S., Cullen, M.A., White, R. and Kinder, K. (2001) *The Delivery of the Curriculum to Disengaged Young People*, NFER, Slough.

- Kinder, K., Wilkin, A. and Wakefield, A. (1997) *Exclusion: Who Needs It?* NFER, Slough.
- Kinder, K., Halsey, K. Moor, H. and White, R. (2000) *Working out Well: Effective Provision for Excluded Pupils*, NFER, Cardiff.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994) The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants, in *Sociology of Health and Illness* 16(1): 103-121.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. and Cicourel, A. V. (eds.) (1981) *Advances in social theory and methodology*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Kvale, S (1996) *InterViews: an Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Sage, London.
- Lahelma, E. (2002) School is for meeting friends: secondary school as lived and remembered in *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23 (3); 367-381.
- Laing, R. D. (1967) *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Lamb, T. (2000) Reconceptualising disaffection - issues of power, voice and learner autonomy in G. Walraven, C. Parsons and C. Day (eds.), *Combating Social Exclusion Through Education* Garant, Louvain.
- Lather, P. (1986) Research as praxis, in *Harvard Educational Review* 56: 257-77.
- Lawrence, B. and Hayden, C. (1997) Primary school exclusions in *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 3(1); 54-77.
- Lee, R. (1993) *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, Sage, London.
- Levacic, R. (1994) *Improving Educational Management through Research and Consultancy*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Levitas, R. (1998) *The Inclusive Society*, Macmillan, London.
- Lewis, A. (1992) Group child interviews in *British Educational Research Journal*, 18 (4); 413-421.
- Lewis, A. and Lindsay, G. (eds.) (2000) *Researching Children's Perspectives*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Sage, Beverly Hills.

Lloyd, G. and Norris, C. (1999) Including ADHD? in *Disability and Society*, 14 (4); 505-517.

Lloyd, G., and Padfield, P. (1996) Re-integration into mainstream? 'Gi'e us peace!' in *British Journal of Special Education*, 23(4); 180-186.

Lloyd, G., Stead, J. and Kendrick, A. (2001) *Hanging on in there; a study of inter-agency work to prevent school exclusion in three local authorities*, National Children's Bureau and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London.

Lloyd, T. (2002) *Underachieving young men preparing for work: A report for practitioners*. London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Lloyd-Smith, M. and Dwyfor-Davies, J. (1995) *On the Margins: the Educational Experiences of 'Problem' Pupils*, Trentham, Stoke.

Lloyd-Smith, M. and Tarr, J. (2000) Researching children's perspectives: a sociological perspective, in A. Lewis and G. Lindsay (eds.) *Researching Children's Perspectives*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Machin, D. (undated) *Being Young in Scotland in 2003: Youthlink's Research Findings*, Youthlink Scotland, Edinburgh.

Mahon, A. Glendinning, C., Clarke, A. and Craig, G. (1996) Researching children: methods and ethics, in *Children and Society*, 10; 145-154.

Malcolm, H., Thorpe, S. and Lowden, M. (1996) *Understanding Truancy: links between attendance, truancy and performance*, SCRE Report No. 72, Edinburgh.

Martin, T., Hayden, C., Turner, D. and Ramsell, K. (1999) *Out of School and into Trouble?* SSRUI, Portsmouth.

Martino, W. (1999) 'Cool Boys', 'Party Animals', 'Squids' and 'Poofters': interrogating the dynamics and politics of adolescent masculinities in school in *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20(2); 239-263.

Mayall, B. (1994) *Children's Childhoods: Observed and Experienced*, Falmer Press, London.

MacBeath, J. (1999) *Schools Must Speak For Themselves; the Case for School Self-Evaluation*, Routledge/Falmer, London.

MacBeath, J. (1997) *Teaching With Care* (video), University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.



- MacBeath, J. (1989a) *Talking About Schools; What Makes a Good School*, HMSO, Edinburgh.
- MacBeath, J. (1989b) *Talking About Schools; Main Findings*, HMSO, Edinburgh.
- McCormick, J. and Leicester, G. (1998) *Three Nations; social exclusion in Scotland*, Scottish Council Foundation, Edinburgh.
- McDonald, K. (1999) *Struggles for Subjectivity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- McLean, A. (1987) After the belt: school processes in low exclusion schools in *School Organization*, 7(3); 303-310.
- McMillan, G. (2000) *Exclusion figures*, unpublished, Edinburgh.
- Mellor, A. (1999) Scotland, in P.K. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tas, D. Olweus, R. Catalano and P. Slee (eds.) *The Nature of School Bullying; a cross-national perspective*, Routledge, London.
- Miles, M. and Huberman, M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 2nd edition, Sage, London.
- Mills, C. Wright (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Mintzberg, H. (1979) *The Structuring of Organisations: a synthesis of the research*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.
- Moore, R. and Muller, J. (1999) The discourse of 'voice' and the problem of knowledge and identity in the sociology of education, in *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20(2);189-218.
- Morgan, D. (1997) *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., Sage, Beverly Hills.
- Morrow, V. and Richards, M. (1996) The ethics of social research with children: an overview, in *Children & Society* 10: 90-105.
- Mortimore, P. and Whitty, G. (1999). School improvement: A remedy for social exclusion? in A. Hayton (ed.), *Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion*, Kogan Page, London.
- Munn, P. (2002) *National Debate on Education: Analysis of Responses from Teachers, Parents and Pupils*, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.
- Munn, P., Johnstone, M. and Chalmers, V. (1992) *Effective Discipline in Primary Schools and Classrooms*, Paul Chapman, London.

- Munn, P., Johnstone, M. and Chalmers, V. (1992) *Effective Discipline in Secondary Schools and Classrooms*, Paul Chapman, London.
- Munn, P., Lloyd, G. and Cullen, M.A. (2000) *Alternatives to Exclusion from School*, Paul Chapman, London.
- National Autistic Society (2001) *Inclusion and autism; is it working?*, National Autistic Society.
- Oakley, A. (1981) Interviewing women; a contradiction in terms in H. Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*, Routledge, London.
- Oates, C. (2000) The use of focus groups in social science research, in D. Burton (ed.) *Research Training for Social Scientists*, Sage, London.
- Ofsted (1996) *Exclusions from Secondary Schools 1995/96*, Ofsted, London.
- Osler, A. (2000) Children's rights, responsibilities and understandings of school discipline, in *Research Papers in Education* 15(1): 49-67.
- Osler, A. (1997) *Exclusion from school and racial equality: a good practice guide*, Commission for Racial Equality, London.
- Osler, A. and Osler, C. (2002) Inclusion, exclusion and children's rights: a case study of a student with Asperger Syndrome, *Research Papers in Education*, 15 (1); 49-67.
- Osler, A., Street, C., Lall, M. and Vincent, K. (2002) *Not a Problem? Girls and School Exclusion*, National Children's Bureau.
- Osler, A. and Vincent, K. (2003) *Girls and Exclusion: Rethinking the Agenda*, RoutledgeFalmer, London.
- Padfield, P. (2002) What's your reputation at school like? *SCRE Newsletter*(70): 6-7.
- Parsons, C. (1999) *Education, Exclusion and Citizenship*, Routledge, London.
- Parsons, C. (1996) The cost of primary school exclusions, in E. Blyth and J. Milner (eds.) *Exclusion from School*, Routledge, London.
- Paterson, L. (1999) Educational provision: an overview, in T. G. K. Bryce and W. H. Humes (eds.), *Scottish Education*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Peacock, P. (2004), System is crying out for change, in *The Scotsman*, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2004.
- Phtiaka, H. (1997) *Special Kids for Special Treatment*, Falmer Press, London.

- Pomeroy, E. (1999) The teacher-student relationship in secondary school: insights from excluded students, in *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20(4); 465-482.
- Pomeroy, E. (2000) Experiencing exclusion in *Improving Schools* 3(3); 10-19.
- Poppleton, P., and Riseborough, G. (1990) Teaching in the mid-1980's: the centrality of work in secondary teachers' lives in *British Educational Research Journal*, 16(2); 105-124.
- Prout, A. (2002) *Participation, Policy and the Changing Conditions of Childhood*, paper presented to seminar *Challenging 'Social Inclusion'*, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.
- Punch, S. (2002) Interviewing strategies with young people: the 'secret box', stimulus material and task-based activities in *Children and Society* 16: 45-56.
- Pye, J. (1988) *Invisible Children: Who are the real losers at school?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Qvortrup, J. (1994) *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*, European Centre, Vienna.
- Raby, R. (2002) A tangle of discourses: girls negotiating adolescence, in *Journal of Youth Studies*, 5 (4): 425-448.
- Reay, D. and Wiliam, D. (1999) 'I'll be a nothing' : structure, agency and the construction of identity through assessment, *British Educational Research Journal* 25(3); 343-354.
- Rahman, M. (2000) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London.
- Ridge, T. (2002) *Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion: From a Child's Perspective*, Polity Press, Bristol.
- Riddell, S. (1999) Gender and Scottish education in T. G. K. Bryce and W. H. Humes (eds.) *Scottish Education*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Robb, S., Mayall, B. and Oliver, S. (1999) *Critical Issues in Social Research - Power and Prejudice*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Robson, C. (1993) *Real World Research*, Blackwell Press, Oxford.
- Rouse, J. (1994) Power/Knowledge, in G. Gutting (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

- Rudduck, J. (2001) Students and school improvement, in *Improving Schools* 4(2): 7-15.
- Rudduck, J., Chaplain R. and Wallace, G. (1996) *School Improvement : What can Pupils Tell Us*, David Fulton, London.
- Rutter, M. and Smith, D. (eds.) (1995) *Psycho-social Disorders in Young People; Time Trends and their Causes*, Wiley, Chichester.
- Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P., and Ouston, J. (1979) *Fifteen Thousand Hours; Secondary Schools and their Effects on Children*, Open Books, Somerset.
- Ryan, G. and Bernard, H. (2003) Techniques to identify themes in qualitative data, in *Field Methods* (1): 85-109.
- Sammons, P., Hillman, J. and Mortimore, P. (1997). Key characteristics of effective schools: a review of school effectiveness research in J. B. White, M (ed.), *Perspectives on School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, University of London, London.
- Schoon, I. and Bynner, J. (2003) Risk and resilience in the life course: implications for interventions and social policies in *Journal of Youth Studies*, 6(1); 21-31.
- Scott, S., Jackson, S. and Backett-Milburn, K. (1998) Swings and roundabouts: risk anxiety and the everyday worlds of children, in *Sociology*, 32 (4); 689-705.
- Scottish Executive (2004) *Incidents of Violence and Anti-social Behaviour against Local Authority School Staff 2002/03*, [www.scotland.gov.uk/bulletins/00318-00](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/bulletins/00318-00).
- Scottish Executive (2003) *Exclusion from School*, C8/03, Edinburgh.
- Scottish Executive (2003) *Exclusions from Schools 2001/2002*, [www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins)
- Scottish Executive (2002) *Attendance and Absence in Scottish Schools: 1999/2000 to 2001/2002*, [www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins)
- Scottish Executive (2001) *Guidance on Flexibility in the Curriculum*, C3/2001, Edinburgh.
- Scottish Executive (2000) *Scottish School Leavers Survey: 17 in 1997*. Edinburgh.
- Scottish Health Education Unit (2003) *Young People in 2002*, [www.sheu.org.uk](http://www.sheu.org.uk).
- Scottish Office (1998) *Guidance on Issues Concerning Exclusion from School*, C2/98, HMSO, Edinburgh.
- Silverman, D. (2000) *Doing Qualitative Research*, Sage, London.



Simons, H.(ed.)(1980) *Towards a Science of the Singular*, University of East Anglia, Norwich.

Skrtic, T. (1991) The special education paradox; equity as the way to excellence, in *Harvard Educational Review*, **61**:148-206.

Slee, R. (1998) Student action research and school discipline: consulting the experts in the field, presented at *American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting*, San Diego.

Slee, R. (1998) Inclusive education? This must signify 'New Times' in educational research, in *British Journal of Educational Studies* **46**(4); 440-454.

Smith, D. and McAra, L.(2003) *Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime*, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Smith, P.K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R. and Slee, P. (eds.)(1999) *The Nature of School Bullying; a cross-national perspective*, Routledge, London.

Smith, D. and McVie, S. (2003) Theory and method in the Edinburgh study of youth transitions and crime in *British Journal of Criminology*, **43**;169-195.

Smyth, J. and Hattam, R. (2001) 'Voiced research' as a sociology for understanding 'dropping out of school', in *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, **22**(3); 401-415.

Stake, R. E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*, Sage, London.

Stake, R. E. and Trumbull, D. (1982) Naturalistic generalizations, in *Review Journal of Philosophy and Social Science* **7**(1);1-12.

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act (2000)

Stenhouse, L. (1988) *Case Study Methods. Educational Research, Methodology, and Measurement: an International Handbook*, Pergamon, Oxford.

Stewart, C. (2002) *Guidance and Exclusion*, MSc (unpublished),University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Stewart, D. and Shamdasani, P. N (1990) *Focus Group Theory and Practice*, Sage, London.

Stirling, M. (1994) The end of the line? in *Special Children*, **76**: 27-29.

Stirling, M. (1993) A black mark against him? Why are African-Caribbean boys over represented in the excluded pupil population? *Multicultural Education Review*, **15**; 3-6.

Stirling, M. (1992) How many pupils are being excluded? in *British Journal of Special Education*, 19 (4): 128-130.

Stoll, P. and O'Keeffe, D. (1988) Unwillingly to lessons: curriculum, truancy and nationalised education, in *Economic Affairs* **8** (August 1988): 25-28.

Thomas, G. (1998) *The Making of the Inclusive School*, Routledge, London.

Thomson, G., Stewart, M., and Ward, K. (1996) *Criteria for Opening Records of Needs*, Interchange 40, Scottish Office, Edinburgh.

Thomson, R. and Holland, J. (2002) Young people, social change and the negotiation of moral authority, in *Children and Society*, **16**: 103-115.

Troyna, B., Hatcher, R. and Carrington, B. (1992) *Racism in Children's Lives*, Routledge and National Children's Bureau, London.

Troyna, B. and Vincent, S. (1996) 'The ideology of expertism'; the framing of special education and racial equality policies in the local state, in C. Christiansen, C. and Rizvi, F. (eds. ) *Disability and the Dilemmas of Education and Justice*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Underwood, M. (2003) *Social Aggression among Girls*, Guilford Press, New York.

Vulliamy, G. and Webb, R. (2000) *The Social Construction of School Exclusion Rates: Implications for Evaluation Methodology*, Paper presented at British Educational Research Association Conference, Cardiff University, Cardiff.

Walford, G. (ed.) (1998) *Doing Research in Education*, Falmer Press, London.

Wallace, G., Rudduck J., Flutter, J. and Harris, S. (1998) Using ethnographic methods in a study of students' secondary school and post-school careers in G. Walford (ed.) *Doing Research in Education*, Falmer Press, London.

Walraven, G., Parsons C. and Day, C. (eds.) 2000) *Combating Social Exclusion Through Education* Garant, Louvain.

Webb, C. and Kevern, J. (2001) Focus groups as a research method: a critique of some aspects of their use in nursing research, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 33 (6);798-805.

Weiner, G., Arnot, M. and David, M. (1997) Is the future female? Female success, male disadvantage, and changing gender patterns in education in A. H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P.

- Brown and A. S. Wells (eds.), *Education: Culture, Economy and Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Wilson, V. (1997) Focus groups: a useful qualitative method for educational research?' in *British Educational Research Journal*, 23(2); 209-216.
- Wood, A. (1997) *A Study of Exclusion from Secondary Schools*, M.Sc. (unpublished), University of Stirling, Stirling.
- Woodhead, M. (1990) Psychology and the cultural construction of children's needs, in A. James and A. Prout (eds.) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, Falmer Press, London.
- Woods, P. (1990) *The Happiest Days? How pupils cope with school*, Falmer Press, London.
- Wright, A. and Keeley, K. (2003) *Violence and Indiscipline in Schools*; research study commissioned by NASUWT, Perpetuity Group, Leicester.
- Wrigley, T. (2003) Is 'school effectiveness' anti-democratic?, in *British Journal of Educational Studies* 51(2); 89-112.
- Yin, R. (1994) *Case Study Research*, Sage, London.
- Zhang, M. (2003) Links between school absenteeism and child poverty, in *Pastoral Care in Education*, 21(1); 10-18.

## **APPENDIX**

### **DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

#### **Concentric Conversations Guide**

##### **Aim**

Elicit perceptions of the experience of exclusion/disruption from a generality of pupils

##### **Resources**

One Set of Questions for me to read out

Even number of chairs

Flipchart and Paper – one per Question blu-tacked to the wall around the room

Stickits

##### **Instructions**

2. Arrange the chairs so that pairs of chairs face each other and people can move round in the directions indicated:
3. Students sit down facing each other.
4. Facilitator poses first question. Participants have 2-3 minutes to discuss it.
5. After Q1 the facilitator asks outer circle to rotate one person to the right.
6. After Q2 the facilitator asks the inner circle to rotate one person to the right... and so on until everyone had spoken to someone different.
7. At the end of each of the Questions each pair of participants write main points of their discussion on stickits and put on wall-mounted flip chart
8. Final feedback -- Facilitator notes feedback on flip chart paper.



## **Concentric Conversations - Questions**

(All questions 2 mins except Q1 = 1 min)

**1 What were your first thoughts when you were asked to set up the chairs in this way?**

(trying to elicit expectations about approach and likely content e.g. is it Maths or SE or...? Likely to be fun? Involve writing? Any ideas about suitable subject matter for discussion in this format? Relaxing? Energising? Threatening? Comfortable?)

**2 What changes would you make to the school if you were Head Teacher?**

(do they respond in terms of discipline, disruption, Exclusion here or do they take the chance to let off steam about something else? Trying to get at some idea of centrality of Exclusion for the generality)

**3 What do you think the problems might be for a HT wanting to make big changes?**

(elicit some idea of their grasp of structures of school. Where do they see the most intransigent problems- with pupils, teachers, parents, curriculum...)

**4 Do you think the school has a good system for dealing with disruption?**

(what system does the school have? Is it seen to be fair? Effective? Do pupils feel supported? Do they see teachers as feeling supported?)

**5 Do you think people should get Excluded for poor attendance?**

(unlikely this has happened in their school experience, but worth checking.. would they know? How do they distinguish non-attendance and disruption? Anything in common?)

**6 Apart from Exclusion, why else might someone be off school?**

(awareness of impact of illness, illness of family, domestic circumstances, 'slow learner', bullying etc? How legitimate are these reasons for absence? Are they all seen as substantially different from official disciplinary Exclusion in the sense of good reason for absence?)

**7 Do you think Exclusion works?**

(looking for some idea of aims, purposes, effectiveness, consequences? What happens when people come back?)

**8 What do you see as being the main aims of Exclusion from school?**

(seeking ideas about official purpose. Understanding of when it is officially sanctioned? Experience of its use in this school? Ideas about changing 'bad behaviour' or 'keeping the school safe' or sending a message about appropriate behaviour – which of these predominates, if any?)

**9 Do you think pupils have any influence on who gets Excluded?**

**Should they?**

(how involved in decision-making do they feel, when decision affect them directly e.g bullying.

**10 Do you think that people who have been Excluded in this school have always deserved it?**

(involvement in disruptive incidents, bullying? Are some people seen to be more likely to be scapegoats than instigators?)

**11 Do all the people who disrupt lessons get Excluded at one time or another?**

(gender differences, ethnic, disabilities, home circumstances..do there seem to be differences? Reputation?)

**12 What are the signs that someone is heading for Exclusion?**

(are there identifiable characteristics of Excluees?)

**13 Do you think that teachers think Exclusion works?**

(awareness of teachers' perceptions, examples of pupil/teacher interaction, collusion between 'good' pupils and teacher?)

## Disruption Cards

Each of the following sentence starts was transferred to individual laminated cards

The first thing I do when I get here in the morning is...

When I was starting secondary school I felt...

The worst punishment in this school is...

If I had £50 000 to spend in the school I would...

When I think about leaving school I...

If I could change one rule in school ...

One thing I would ban if I was in charge of school...

My best school trip was...

The class I behave best in is...

The most scary person at primary school was...

If I had to deal with people who upset the class I would...

My funniest moment was...

When people muck about I...

The last time I handed in homework was...

One thing I like doing after school is...

One place I'd like to visit is...

My best memory from primary school is...

One thing that annoys me about school is...

My worst subject is...

My best subject is...

One thing I'm going to do when I'm 18 is...

One thing I like about school is...

One thing I got blamed for is...

One thing I'm going to do when I'm 18 is...	One thing I like about school is...	One thing I got blamed for is...	
The first thing I do when I get here in the morning is...	When I was starting secondary school I felt...	The worst punishment in this school is...	My best school trip was...
If I had £50 000 to spend in the school I would...	When I think about leaving school I...	The class I behave best in is...	If I could change one rule in school ...
One thing I would ban if I was in charge of school...	The most scary person at primary school was...	If I had to deal with people who upset the class I would...	My funniest moment was...
When people muck about I...	The last time I handed in homework was...	One thing I like doing after school is...	One place I'd like to visit is...
My best memory from primary school is...	One thing that annoys me about school is...	My worst subject is...	My best subject is...



**Trigger**

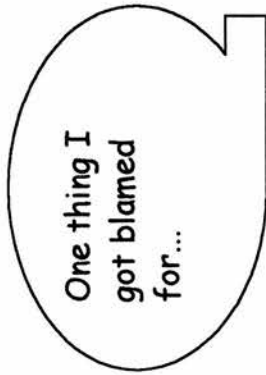
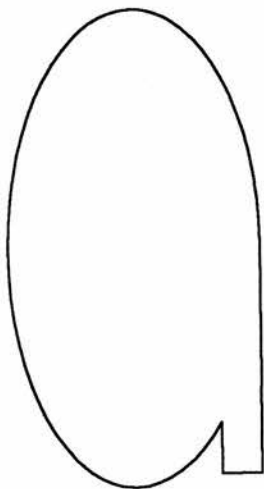
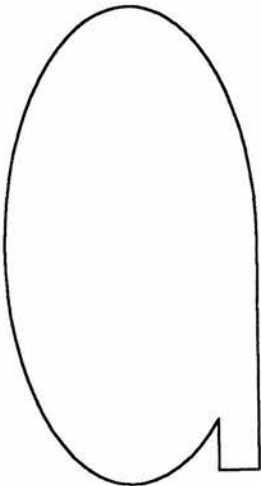
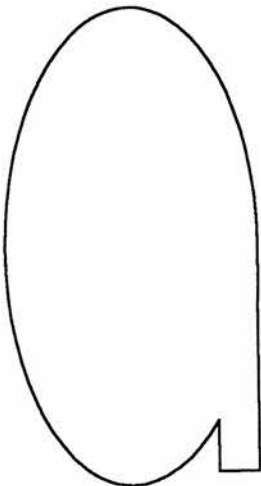
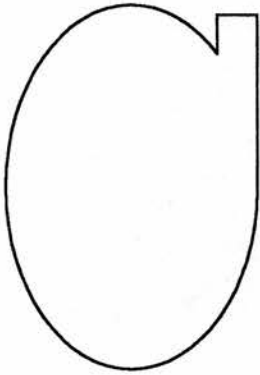
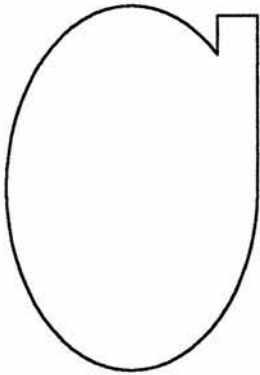
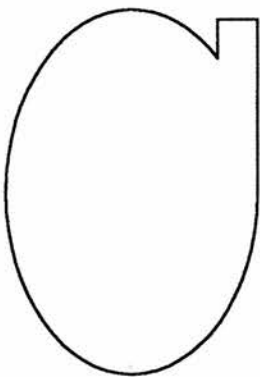
When I started  
secondary  
school I felt...

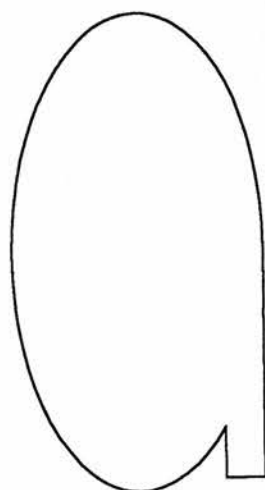
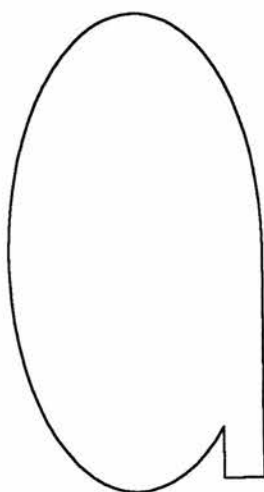
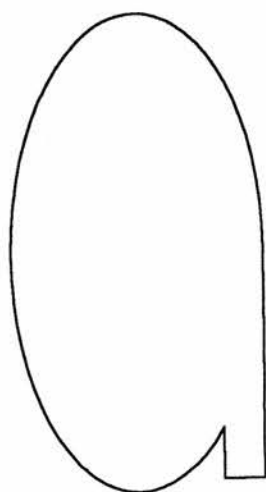
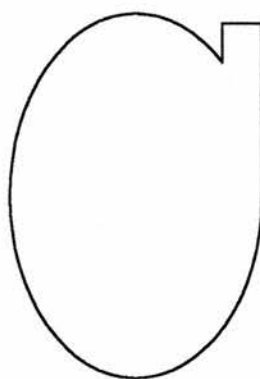
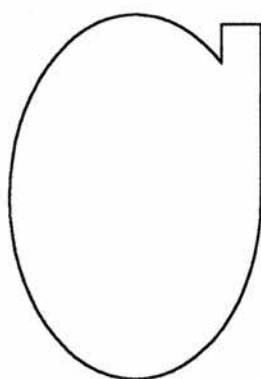
**You said**

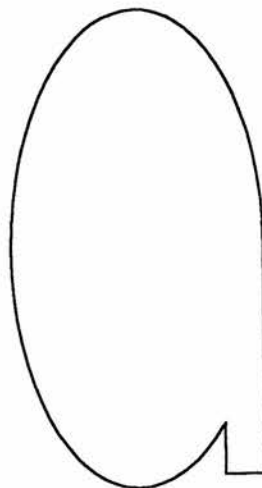
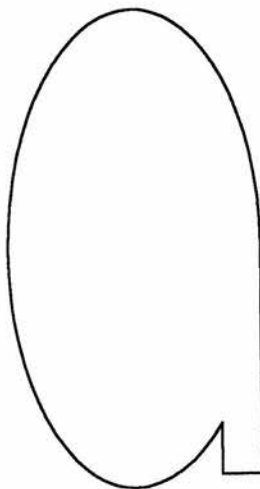
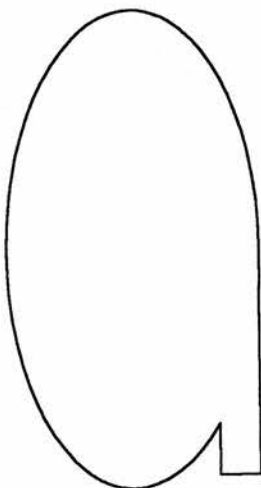
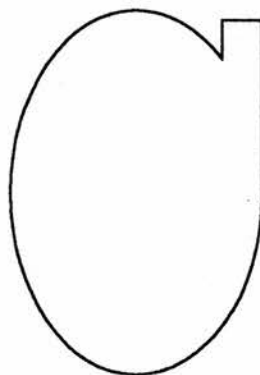
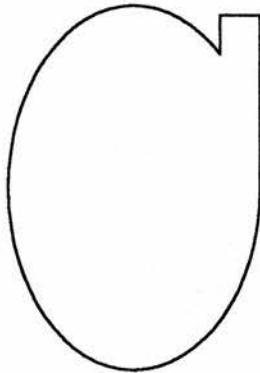
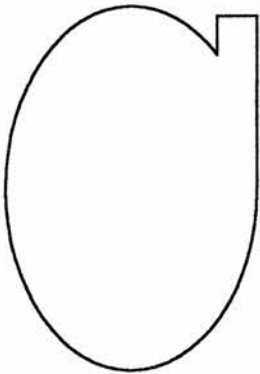
e.g scared  
happy  
worried  
great

**Any comments now?**

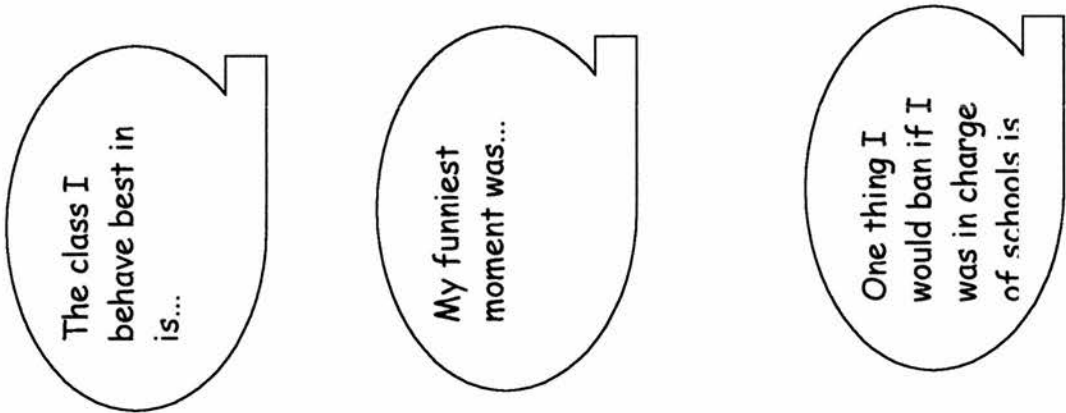
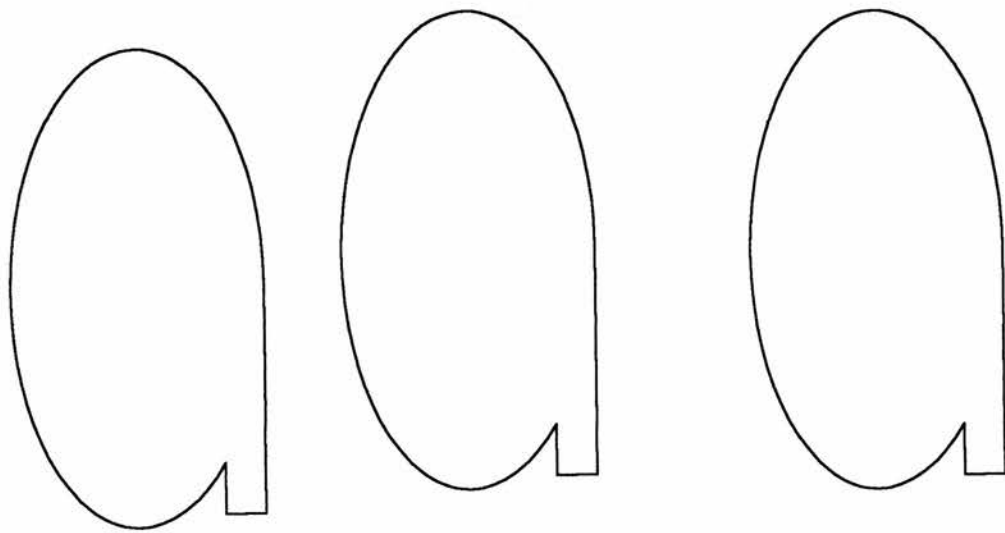
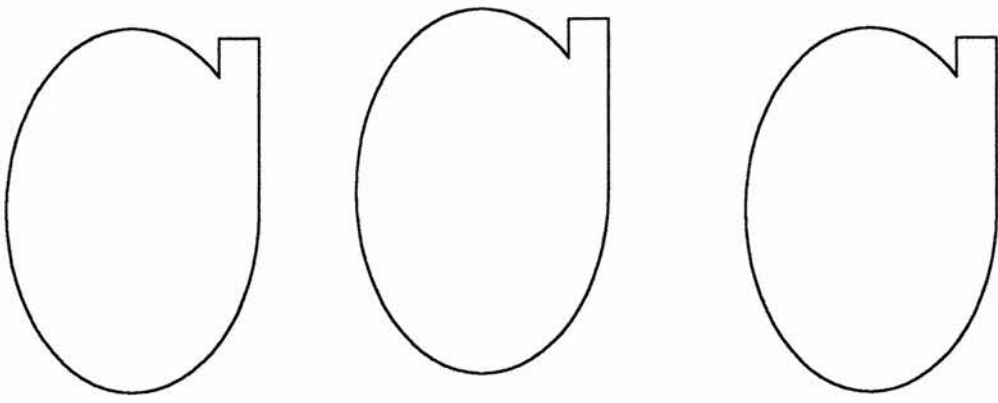
The worst  
punishment in  
this school is...







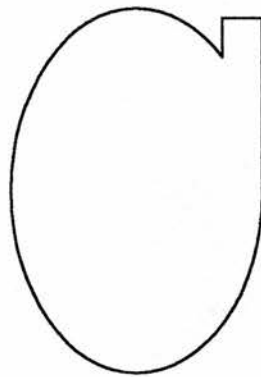
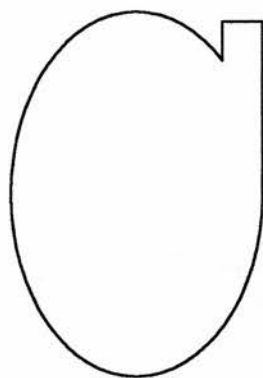
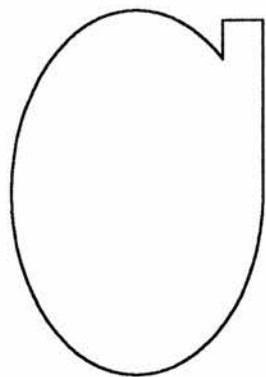
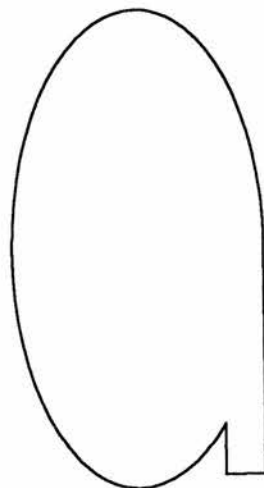
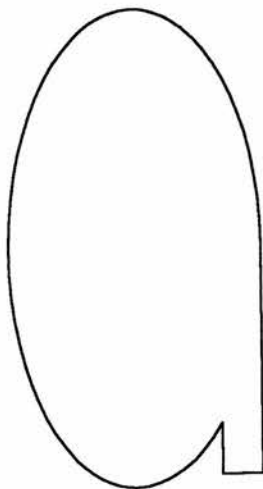
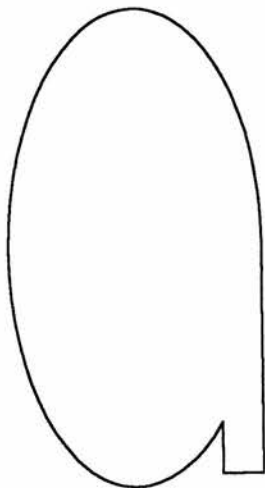




If I could  
change one  
rule in school...

The first thing  
I do when I  
get here in the  
morning is

If I had to deal with  
people who upset the  
class I would...

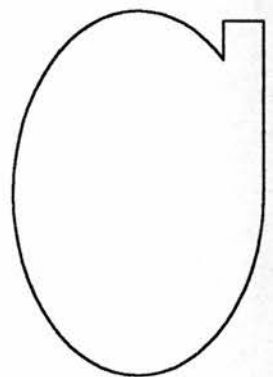
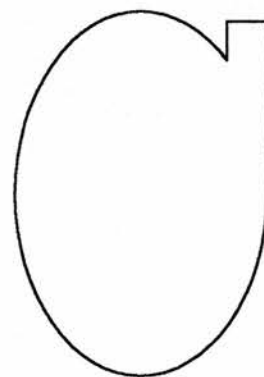
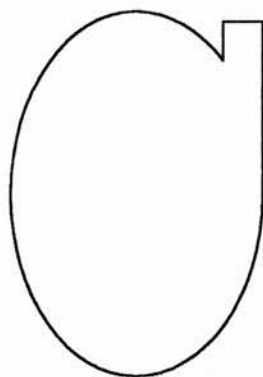
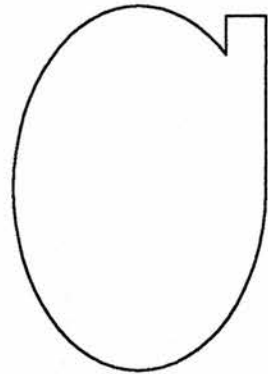
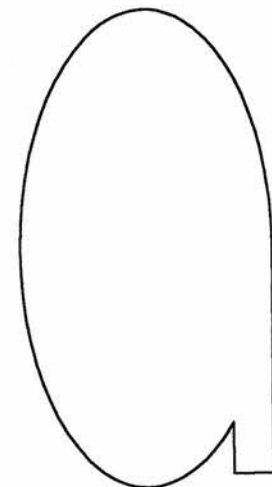
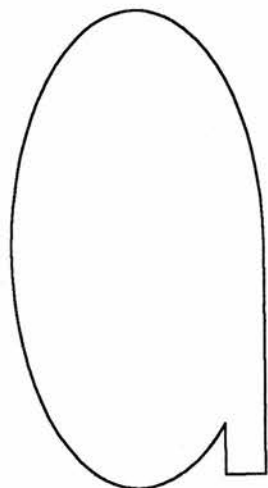
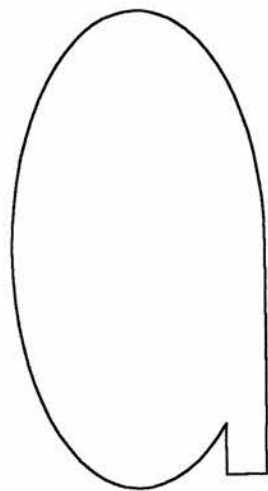


One thing I'm  
going to do  
when I'm 18  
is

The most  
scary person in  
primary school  
was

My best school  
trip was...

My worst  
subject is...



## Interview Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>
<b>Time Begin</b>	<b>Time End</b>
<b>Week of Term</b>	<b>Place</b>
<b>Layer 1      2      3</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Tape/Note</b>	

### Introduction

My name is Gillean McCluskey, in case you don't remember. I'm hoping to ask you about your opinions and experiences about school and exclusion for a project I'm doing at college. Will that be okay?

Can I just remind you that you can stop any time, and you can decide not to answer any question. Just let me know. It's totally up to you. Is that okay?

And it's confidential. Anything you say is private and I'll give you the chance to check over what I've written down to make sure it's right. Later on I'll ask if it's alright with you if I use your comments in the report I'm putting together. Again, it's up to you. But your name wouldn't be included.

The only time I would tell anybody what you say is if you start to tell me something that makes me think you might be being hurt by somebody.

Is that all okay? Do you want to check anything with me?

☐

Agree to start

If you think of anything later, just stop me.

I would like to tape this so I can be sure I don't miss anything. Are you happy about that?

*Offer control of tape recorder to interviewee*

*Show the question sheet to the participant.*

*Sit side by side at a desk, if possible, to fill in together.*

I'm going to ask you about school first and then other things...



## Interview focus and Research Questions

**E** = official Exclusion  
**e** = unofficial exclusion  
**w** = wider sense of exclusion

Areas of interest/trigger questions	Research Questions
1. Can I just check a few things first... name, age, year group, class	
2. How long have you been at this school? Did you get help settling in?	E1, E2 e1, e2 w1, w2
3. Where were you before coming here?	E1, E2 e1, e2 w1, w2
4. Can you tell me the names of any other schools, including primaries, that you've been to?	E1, E2 e1, e2 w1, w2
5. Can you tell me why you have moved schools?	E1, E2 e1, e2 w1, w2
6. Which was your best school?	E1, E2 e1, e2 w1, w2

7. How do you find the teachers/other adults here?	E1, E2 e1, e2 w1, w2
8. Do you think teachers make a difference between boys and girls?	E1, E2, E3 e1, e2, e3 w1, w2, w3
9. How do you find the people in your classes?	E2 e2 w2
10. Can you tell me about the best time you ever had at school? What about your friends? What are they like? What do you do together? What do you do at lunchtime and break? What about other groups in the school? (Martino 1999)	E2 e2 w2
11. What about the not so good times?	E2 e2 w2
12. I want to ask you about your subjects, if that's okay. Do you have a best subject? Did you get to choose the subjects you wanted – S3?	E2 e2 w2
13. I'm interested in Exclusion, suspension for behaviour How do you think it works here? Do you know if it works differently at other schools/your last school?	E1, E2, E3 e2 w2

14. Do you think it works – putting someone out of school?	E1, E2, E3 e2 w2
15. Do you (and your mates) find it hard to work if there's someone mucking about?	E2, E3 e2, e3 w3
16. Does Exclusion happen a lot here? What happens when someone comes back from Exclusion?	E1, E3 e1, e3 w1, w3
17. Do you think the school tries to help people if they have a problem? What kinds of things do you know of/been involved with? What/who else helps?	E1, E3 E1, e3 w1, w3
18. What about people who sit outside the head's office all day?	E1, E3 E1, e3 w3
19. Do you think some people bottle up problems when they're at school?	E1, E3 E1, e3 w3
20. Who do you think helps them most- teachers, or their mates or or...? family	E1, E3 E1, e3 w3

21. What about people who take days off or miss periods. How does the school deal with that here?	E3 e3 w3
22. Do you think there can be genuine reasons why people need to miss school but they can't tell anyone?	E3 e3 w3
Do you think/know there are other things that the school could do/does instead of putting people out?	E1,E3 e1,e3 w1,w3
23. <i>My last questions are about outside school</i> Can you tell me what kinds of things you do in the evening, weekends, holidays?	E2 e2 w2
24. Are the people you sit beside at school the same ones you see away from here?	E2 e2 w2
25. What kinds of things do you think you'll do when you're away from school and have money of your own to spend?	E2 e2 w2



<p>26. What do you think folks at home want to see you do when you leave?</p> <p><b>That's me finished the questions...</b></p>	<p>E2 e2 w2</p>
<p><i>Anything you want to go back to or check?</i></p>	
<p><i>Anything you want to ask me?</i></p>	

Thank you very much. That's been a real help.

I'd like to let you check what you've told me. Do you want to do that now or will I send a copy in the post to you? Do you want it on paper or on tape?

One final thing. I'd like to have a look at your school file. Would you mind that?

As you know I'm wanting to speak to people who've got strong opinions about school and exclusion. Can you think of anyone else I could ask to speak to?

*Allow time for a game to finish with. Eg Connect 4, drafts, cards.*

<b>Behaviour Questionnaire 2</b>	<b>Done this yourself?</b>				<b>When others do it ... Has it...</b>			
	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	A lot	Put you off working a bit?	Seriously annoyed you/stopped you working?	Did not bother you?	Hasn't happened?
Interrupting the teacher								
Wandering about the class								
Turning round in your seat								
Shouting out								
Fighting in the corridor								
Fighting in the classroom								
Throwing things								
Fighting after school								
Drinking at the school disco								

	Done this yourself?					When others do it ... Has it...			
	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	A lot		Put you off working a bit?	Seriously annoyed you/stopped you working?	Did not bother you?	Hasn't happened?
Smoking in the toilets									
Not bringing PE kit									
Forgetting Maths homework									
Refusing to do a punishment exercise									
Picking on people									
Swearing at teacher									
Swearing at pupils									
Taking up teacher time after being off									
Coming into class late									
Taking up teacher time after coming back from exclusion									

	Done this yourself?				When others do it ... Has it...			
	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	A lot	Put you off working a bit?	Seriously annoyed you/stopped you working?	Did not bother you?	Hasn't happened?
Winding other people up so they get in trouble								
Have you been Excluded for causing trouble?								
Have you skived school?								
Have you had Level 1 or Level 2 cards?								

Are you

male		female	
------	--	--------	--

**Volunteers! Would you be willing to answer some more questions another time?**

YES		NO <sup>1</sup>	
-----	--	-----------------	--

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Munn and Johnstone 'particularly difficult behaviours as reported by secondary school teachers in 1996 (1997:13 ) and 'Pupil behaviours around the school found particularly difficult to deal with (secondary school teachers) 1996 (1997:20).